British Maritime History, National Identity and Film, 1900-1960

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Victoria Diane Carolan, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

This thesis consists of 99,675 words, excluding appendices and the bibliography.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the creation, transmission and preservation of the idea of Britain as a 'maritime nation' on film from 1900 to 1960. By placing an analysis of maritime films' frequency, content and reception into the broader maritime sphere and the British film industry, this thesis explores how maritime symbols functioned to project national identity.

Films are used as the major source to provide an evidential frame through which to assess the depth and functioning of maritime culture in mass culture. The thesis traces the origins of key concepts associated with a maritime identity to establish the configuration of maritime history in popular culture by 1900. It then examines the importance of maritime film production during the period 1900-1939; the representation of shipbuilding from the 1930s; maritime scenarios in Second World War film; maritime comedies; and post-war maritime films. It concludes by suggesting the reasons for the decline in the frequency of maritime film after 1960.

The thesis argues first, that the relationship established in the Victorian period between the nation and the maritime sphere endured with remarkable strength. Only after 1960 was the contemporary element of this connection broken by a combination of the decline of the subject matter and by political and social change. The second argument is that to understand these films it is essential to consider them as a complete body of evidence as well as individual films in discrete time periods. By setting these films back into the tradition from which they came is it possible to understand how symbols of national identity became so embedded that they became unquestioned: the most powerful level at which such symbols operate.

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Contents

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Introduction

> There is something odd and extraordinarily heart-warming about the way a story of ships and the men who serve in them will stir in an Englishmen. His experience of the sea may have been limited to a trip from Blackpool to Fleetwood, down the Thames to Margate, from Southampton to the Isle of Wight, but the atavistic feeling remains. It is not the fascination that people feel for flying; the mixture of dread and excitement; the urgent thrust towards individual freedom in the skies with the same passion that sends artists to South Sea Islands. It is a much heavier and more racial attachment, and nobody can quite explain today, except on the grounds of heredity, why it continues to operate. But there is no doubt that it does operate: and any British producer who applies himself honestly to a film or a play about the Navy can count on a flow of feeling from his actors, and a resultant flow of sympathy from his audience. The salt in our blood will do the rest.[1]

So wrote the film critic C.A. Lejeune in 1950 and herein lies the starting point of this thesis. The notion of a natural connection between the British and the sea remains strong to this day, but at the time Lejeune wrote, ideas of the 'seafaring' or 'maritime' nation were even more commonplace. Up until this point, however, these relationships, mystified by the notion of 'the sea in the blood', remain little analysed.

As will be seen, Lejeune's conceptualisation of the connection between nation and sea was one to which many Britons in the first two-thirds of the twentieth century would have subscribed. In this construction, that connection was the result of a particularly British heredity: there was an inborn link between Britons and the sea that was not only held in common nationally but individually inherited. All Britons, whatever their personal relationship to the oceans, had salt in their blood: it shaped both the ideas of national destiny and national characteristics.

The assumption of an inbuilt set of national characteristics in fact indicated that a set of symbols had become so culturally embedded as to seem inexplicable except by heredity. The shared sense of maritime identity was not a matter of inheritance but rather the result of complex and interlinking social and cultural constructions. The link between nation and navy was not automatic, but rather a learnt relationship, reflecting a distinct set of values, that had to be continually reinforced. This thesis will demonstrate, through film, the process by which the sea functioned as a symbol of

[1] C.A. Lejeune, 'The Salt in Our Blood', *Observer*, 24 February 1950.

national identity and as a marker of national characteristics in Britain during the twentieth century.

1. Overall aims and subject of the thesis

1.1 Subject and scope

This thesis examines the creation, transmission and preservation of the idea of Britain as a 'maritime nation' on film from 1900 to 1960. It investigates how the linkage constructed between the maritime sphere and national identity between the sixteenth and the nineteenth century was played out on film during a period in which cinema enjoyed its heyday as a mass medium and the Royal and Merchant Navies and the British shipbuilding industry were for the last time internationally significant. In the first six decades of the twentieth century, maritime subjects were so frequently represented on film as to be an effectively constant cinematic presence. By placing an analysis of these films' frequency, their content and their reception into the broader context of the navies, the maritime industries and the British film industry, this thesis examines how maritime symbols functioned to project national identity.

1.2 Time period

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse the place of maritime film in the transmission of a particular component of national identity. The period 1900-1960 has been selected both because of the nature of the films that were made and because of the place cinema then enjoyed in British national life. These sixty years saw the greatest concentration of maritime related films in the twentieth century. Out of the 580 fictional maritime films this study has identified between 1900 and 2000, 500 were produced before 1960. This period also saw cinema reach its height of popularity as a mass medium. By 1914, there were permanent dedicated cinemas in most towns with cinema building and provision reaching a peak in the 1930s. In 1914 an average of over seven million visits were made to the cinema per week.[2] This figure rose to

[2] Quoted in Jan Rüger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 53.

twenty million per week by the beginning of the Second World War.[3] The 1950s saw the last period of mass cinema-going. Overall visits dropped by a third but by 1959 there were still 14.5 million visits to the cinema per week. This figure still exceeded the number of homes owning televisions and nearly equalled circulation figures of all the national newspapers combined.[4] Therefore cinema reached a sufficiently large proportion of the population to allow this study to draw, in conjunction with other contemporary sources, significant conclusions regarding the absorption of and reaction to maritime symbols.

2. Historiography

2.1 Literature on national identity

Over the last twenty-five years the construction of national identity has become a major category of historical analysis in the Western world. Stimulated, perhaps, by contemporary international and social change as well as by academic fashion, the history of British and English national identities has become a particularly rich field.[5] Yet major surveys of British and English national identity make little reference to the maritime world. For example Ward's *Britishness Since 1870*[6] makes only a reference to the Navy League, Kumar's *The Making of English National Identity*[7] makes only passing references to Hakluyt, Ralegh and Nelson. Linda Colley's influential *Britons*[8] gives no systematic analysis of maritime influence, although there is some discussion of individuals such as Nelson. There is some literature that analyses the impact of the navy upon culture in the context of the military in general. This literature deals almost exclusively with Britain in wartime, such as Lucy Noakes' *War and the British,*[9] and Nora Feminia's *National Identity in Times of Crises.*[10]

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[3] Nicholas Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda: Myth or Reality* (London: Cassell, 1999), p. 37.
[4] John Ramsden, 'Re-focusing the People's War: Films of the 1950s', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19/1 (1984), p. 36.
[5] For a discussion of 'Britishness' and 'Englishness' and their use in this work, see the next section.
[6] Paul Ward, *Britishness since 1870* (London: Routledge, 2004).
[7] Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[8] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Pimlico, 1994).
[9] Lucy Noakes, *War and the British: Gender and National Identity, 1939-1991* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1997).
[10] Nora Feminia, *National Identity in Times of Crises: The Scripts of the Falklands-Malvinas War* (New York: Nova Science, 1996).

Ken Lunn and Ann Day have discussed the role of the sea in the formation of national identity. They themselves highlight the rarity value of their work. More often, as they identify (citing authors such as David Lowenthal[11] and Alun Howkins[12]), formulations of British national identity have been linked to the rural tradition. Lunn and Day claim that when the sea has been present in discussions of identity, it has been so, on the basis of a 'quasi-biological notion of "the sea in the blood"'.[13] They suggest that this pattern fits with Billig's notions of 'banal nationalism,' that is everyday representations of nation in the form of such examples as common phrases or symbols such as flags.[14] Lunn and Day's analysis is problematic because it draws examples almost indiscriminately from different time periods. It thus fails to interrogate potential chronological shifts in the use of the maritime. Most of their references come from the early part of the twentieth century. This period is important, bearing in mind its long influence over the twentieth century, but it is also misleading, since there was such focus on the navy in popular culture and political debate at this time, as has been demonstrated by the work of Jan Rüger.[15] In addition, although their article's title encompasses identity and the 'sea', their analysis in fact concentrates almost exclusively on the Royal Navy and ignores the wider maritime sphere.

The last twenty years have also seen a growing interest in and expansion of maritime history. In a move away from military and economic histories there have been a number of new approaches. O'Hara, for example, draws attention to 'the new maritime history' in areas such as trading networks, oceanic history, social history relating to the lower decks, cultural history, travel and tourism and environmental histories.[16] These trends have seen a number of works produced in recent years which address sometimes less directly the role of the sea in the formation of national identity. Most of these have dealt with discrete time periods which fall out of the

[11] David Lowenthal, 'British National Identity and the English Landscape', *Rural History*, 2/2 (1991), pp. 205-230.
[12] Alun Howkins, 'The Discovery of Rural England', in Robert Colls and Philip Dodd (eds) *Englishness, Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 62-88.
[13] Ken Lunn & Ann Day, 'Britain as Island: National Identity and the Sea', in Helen Brocklehurst and Robert Phillips, *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 125.
[14] Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).
[15] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*.
[16] Glen O'Hara, *Britain and the Sea: Since 1600* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 1.

central period of this thesis, for example Kathleen Wilson's *The Island Race*[17] and Margarette Lincoln's *Representing the Royal Navy: British Sea Power 1750–1815.*[18] In addition there are a number of texts that are rooted in the period from the late nineteenth century to the First World War. Rüger's *The Great Naval Game*[19] focuses on the cult of the navy in relation to Britain and Germany and the naval arms race. W. Mark Hamilton's *The Nation and Navy, Methods and Organization of British Navalist Propaganda, 1889-1914*[20] concentrates on naval activists through institutions such as Parliament, the navy and the press. Cynthia Fansler Behnman's *Victorian Myths of the Sea* discusses key tropes of Britain's relationship with the sea such as sovereignty and the cult of Nelson.[21] There are two edited texts on the legacy of Nelson which were put together for the bicentenary of his death: Cannadine's *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy* and Holger Hoock's *History, Commemoration, and National Preoccupation: Trafalgar 1805-2005.*[22] The essays in the 'Legacy' section of Cannadine's work concentrate on the period up Nelson centenary in 1905 and this is also the focus for the first half of Hoock's text. The second part of Hoock's work looks at specific reactions to the bicentenary in 2005 which do not substantially consider the intervening period that forms the bulk of this thesis.

Culture within the navy with particular regards to gender, uniform and class in the twentieth century has been addressed by Quintin Colville's unpublished thesis *The Role of Material Culture in Constructing Class-related Identities among Royal Naval Personnel, 1930-1960* and in two subsequent related articles.[23] These look at naval

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[17] Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2002).

[18] Margarette Lincoln, Representing *the Royal Navy: British Sea Power 1750-1815* (Aldershot: National Maritime Museum/ Ashgate, 2002).

[19] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*.

[20] W. Mark Hamilton, *The Nation and Navy, Methods and Organization of British Navalist Propaganda, 1899-1914* (London: Garland, 1986).

[21] Cynthia Fansler Behrman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1977).

[22] David Cannadine (ed.), *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); Holger Hoock (ed.), *History, Commemoration, and National Preoccupation: Trafalgar 1805-2005* (Oxford: The British Academy/ Oxford University Press, 2007).

[23] Quintin Colville, *The Role of Material Culture in Constructing Class-related Identities among Royal Naval Personnel, 1930-1960* (London: Royal College of Art/ Victoria and Albert Museum Unpublished PhD thesis, 2004); Colville, Quintin, 'Jack Tar and the Gentleman Officer: The Role of Uniform in Shaping the Class and Gender-Related Identities of British Naval Personnel, 1930-1939', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 13 (2003), pp. 105-129 and Colville, Quintin, 'Corporate Domesticity and Idealised Masculinity: Royal Naval Officers and their Shipboard Homes, 1918-39', *Gender and History* 23/3 (2009), pp. 499-519.

culture in relation to socio-culture through material culture. The study largely ignores the Second World War, as an exceptional period in the culture of the navy, although it recognises the conflict's impact on social attitudes in the post-war navy.

The only work to take a long term view is Glen O'Hara's recent *Britain and the Sea since 1600.*[24] This is the first major survey to concentrate on the national relationship with the sea and its impact on identity, which considers both the Royal Navy and the wider maritime sphere and which takes in the breadth of the twentieth century. It is a relatively short survey, conceived as a textbook and, while a necessary addition to existing literature, it serves partly to highlight the amount of work that remains to be done. O'Hara recognises the enormity of his task and concludes that his text:

> might begin to provide a history of Britishness that pays tribute to this...relatively neglected factor in the development of national identities...Understanding maritime businesses, crimes, slavery , exile and confinement, Briton's invasions, inventions, defeats, journeys, protests and service can...help construct a new way of looking at British history in the world.[25]

2.2 Historiography of Film and National Identity

A number of texts deal with national identity and film, again mostly dealing with discrete time periods.[26] The widest survey is Jeffrey Richards' *Films and British National Identity.*[27] Maritime films are not discussed as separate entities in this work. The large numbers of texts on film which have some bearing on any discussion of navy and nation deal almost exclusively with the Second World War.[28] The only example to examine the naval film over a longer period is Jonathan Rayner's *The*

[24] O'Hara, *Britain and the Sea*.
[25] Ibid., p. 243
[26] For example: James Chapman, *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Justine Ashby and Andrew Higson, *British Cinema: Past and Present* (London: Routledge, 2000); Kenton Bamford, *Distorted Images: British National Identity and Film in the 1920s* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1999); Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).
[27] Jeffrey Richards, *Films and British National Identity: From Dickens to Dad's Army* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997).
[28] For example: James Chapman, *The British at War: Cinema, State and Propaganda 1939-1945* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998) S. P. Mackenzie, *British War Films 1939-1945: The Cinema and the Services* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2001), and Anthony Aldgate & Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: British Cinema in the Second World War* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2007) amongst others.

Naval War Film.[29] Rayner has gone some way to contextualising the naval war film in terms of national cinema (relating to both Britain and the United States of America), but concentrates on the Royal Navy and the US Navy, and his enquiry only begins with World War Two. Tony Thomas casts his net wide in his survey *The Cinema of the Sea*,[30] but the bulk of films he considers were made after the 1930s and mostly in America. Thomas organises films according to theme and discusses them as separate entities rather than as an ongoing discourse.

In summary, there is little extended work that analyses the cultural impact of British maritime history in respect of national identity, either in general or in particular relationship to cinematic representations. There is also a bias towards the impact of the Royal Navy. In terms of film there is no work that looks at the wider maritime sphere, or that considers maritime films before 1939. This work seeks to address this second absence, but to do so, it is necessary, with care, to venture back beyond the advent of cinema in order to suggest the origins of film-makers', critics' and audiences' beliefs. To do otherwise would be to risk the error identified in some existing work: the assumption that because a particular signifier can be found within a supposedly discrete historical period, it originated in that moment.

3. Methodology

3.1 Film as methodology

Film is used in this thesis as an evidential frame to assess the extent to which maritime culture permeated mass culture by analysing the filmic discourse relating to it. Film has been chosen because of its accessibility, that is, its ability to reach a wide audience largely irrespective of intellect, race, gender, class, income or geographic location. It is recognised that within this, appeal or consumption were not spread evenly; for example during this period the working class formed the bulk of the audience. The question of what actually reached the audience is complicated by the

[29] Jonathan Rayner, *The Naval War Film: Genre, History and National Cinema* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)
[30] Tony Thomas, *The Cinema of the Sea: A Critical Survey and Filmography 1925-1986* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 1988).

commercial imperative of cinema and the tensions in 'a culture that measured success by popularity rather than aesthetic merit'.[31]

Nonetheless, film was the most popular art form for the first half of the twentieth century, and cinema did not in itself exclude any of the multiple categories within society: it can therefore be considered a democratic medium. It played an important role in both the representation and the creation of dominant themes of popular culture. Films give some indication of what was likely to be understood by a wide audience: not least because of the commercial imperative within which they operated. This study uses film in this respect to bear witness to attitudes towards maritime matters; what an audience might be expected to know in relation to them and how this shifted over time. For example, one of the ways in which films of the period emphasised maritime tradition was through familial tie, with characters claiming to have had relatives serve under Drake or Nelson. These reference were a part of what Sorlin refers to as 'historical capital' based on the claim that; 'the cultural heritage of every country and community includes dates, events and characters known to all members of that community'.[32] Such references acted as markers to an audience in how to read the film. These do not necessarily remain static and such markers of commonality are continually negotiated and amended, and can fall out of public consciousness. In this respect films are a product of the times in which they are made and as such can be more illuminating about that period than the one in which they are set. This thesis draws upon this idea in tracing the relationship between the maritime sphere and national identity. This is not to assume that the audience necessarily identified with such notions, merely that they recognised them as links between an idea of Britishness and the sea. Even if they were initially unable to access the historical capital invested by scriptwriters and producers, the proliferation of maritime films over the period repeated such tropes with such regularity that they could come to be understood as part of a discourse about sea and nation.

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[31] D. L. LeMathieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), p. 3.
[32] Pierre Sorlin, *The Film in History: Restaging the Past* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1980), p. 19.

In assessing the films this study draws on the methods of what Chapman, Harper and Glancy have referred to as the 'New Film History'.[33] This considers film not as a 'reflection of social reality' but in terms of representation, and prioritises primary sources such as contemporary journalism, Mass Observation surveys and Parliamentary Debates in its analyses.[34] This thesis places less emphasis on the process of productions than on tracing the use of maritime imagery as it ultimately appeared on screen.

Sue Harper and Vincent Porter have recently disparaged the use of newspaper reviews as a means of looking at the cultural significance of film with particular regard to the 1950s:

> Reviewers and critics in the period rarely represented any views but their own (or possibly their editor's). We have...chosen to give more credence to a film's popularity in assessing its cultural significance, rather than to the views of a self-appointed minority of articulate individuals. [35]

Newspaper reviews are used extensively in this study in the acknowledgement that it is problematic to judge how far they can be considered representative of audiences. Nevertheless – and this is a point ignored in the narrower studies conducted by Harper and Porter - reviews are the only source that provide a close to constant level of evidence over a long period. Other sources, such as box office returns and surveys, which are also used within this thesis, may be seen to offer a more objective measure of popularity, but they are also limited, first in that they do not give a qualitative response to the content of the film itself and second in that they are not available for all films or all time periods.

3.2 Film selection

'Maritime' and 'maritime history' for the purposes of this thesis are taken in their broadest sense to refer to any aspect of man's relationship to the sea, as descriptive

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[33] James Chapman, Mark Glancy and Sue Harper (eds), *The New Film History: Sources, Methods, Approaches* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 2.
[34] Chapman, Glancy and Harper, *The New Film History*, p. 7.
[35] Sue Harper and Vincent Porter (eds), *British Cinema of the 1950s: The Decline of Deference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 2.

terms. The elements that make up the maritime sphere are wide and it is beyond the scope of this study to cover them all. It does not seek to analyse every film where the sea made an appearance. It does, however, chart the frequency of such films, as one of the purposes of the thesis is to demonstrate the extent to which sea narratives were pervasive during this period.

Maritime films do not fit neatly into one genre. Often they cross separate genres and subgenres. A naval movie, for example, might include elements which could be categorised as adventure, historical adventure, romance or swashbuckling. This study recognises that the maritime film operates within a set of identified genres which generate audience expectations, but it does not attempt to create a new set of subgenres. Bearing in mind that it is not possible to look at every maritime film, it is necessary to outline the basis on which selection is made and how they are defined within this study.

'Maritime film' as a term here is taken to include films that cover any aspect of the full spectrum of maritime activity. Within this films have been selected thematically rather than by established genres, directors, actors or critical or popular success. The study discusses documentary and non-fiction film but concentrates mostly on fictional feature film. This is because, other than at the very beginnings of the film industry, the dissemination of feature film was generally much wider.

This study concentrates on historical and contemporary portrayals of the Royal Navy, the Merchant Navy and shipbuilding. Associated maritime industries such as fishing and shipbuilding are also included. These have all been chosen on the basis of being a national industry or, in the case of the Royal Navy, a national institution. The selection of films is based primarily on their content. They are films that were released nationally and intended for a wide audience although they are not necessarily those that are best-known or critically successful. The aim is to uncover a wider picture by the consideration of films that have been forgotten or are less written about. They are contextualised in terms of the wider film industry and where evidence exists audience reception is noted. Their reception in terms of critical or popular success is not the main basis for their inclusion, but rather how they fitted into wider discussions of the maritime sphere or identity within and outside of the film industry. Even films

with relatively low audiences contributed to an overall portrayal of the maritime on film.

The discussion of particular types of maritime film takes place through a series of case studies of individual films. This approach is problematic in that it inevitably means that extended discussion of some significant films is omitted. A variety of criteria have been applied in their selection. The starting point was the compilation of the fiction and non-fictional film appendices from which it was possible to assess the distribution of particular types of film by subject and genre in each time period.[36] This highlighted the major trends and individual films were subsequently chosen to enable a representative discussion of the period. These were then narrowed down by viewing as many of the films possible, or reading scripts of films that no longer existed. Other circumstances were also taken in to account, for example certain films such as *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) and *In Which We Serve* (1942) enjoyed great longevity during the twentieth century, were two of the most frequently cited maritime films ever made on which there was a substantial historiography. It was impossible to omit them in a study centred on maritime film. Other practical considerations also came into play: for example the availability of viewing copies of films in archives, or the availability of supporting sources through which to analyse them. It is recognised that many of the individual films chosen could be substituted with other choices, but these were not random choices. With the overview provided by the film lists and the subsequent viewing of a wide selection of the films, it has been, as far as possible to establish that had other films been selected the overall views and conclusions of the thesis would remain the same.

This study includes a small number American made movies, although only those which dealt specifically with the British maritime sphere and had general release in Britain. They are included primarily because this is not a study of a national cinema, but rather about the image of British maritime history on screen and its relationship to national identity. Hollywood-made movies were a fundamental part of British cinema offerings. At a low point for the British film industry in the mid 1920s, 80% of the market was secured by American productions with the remaining 20% shared

[36] The nature, criteria and sources of the film lists are discussed below.

between British productions and those from other European countries.[37] The introduction of the quota system in the 1927 Cinematograph Act required that a minimum percentage of British films – 20% by 1936 – were handled by distributors and exhibitors. From the mid 1930s around 75% of films shown in Britain were American and this figure remained roughly stable throughout the Second World War.[38] It is not simply that a large percentage of the films shown in Britain were American and to ignore them would be to ignore a major element of the British cinema going experience but, because as Glancy shows, a number of Hollywood films were made specifically with a British audience in mind.[39] They also contributed to the filmic discourse that developed in respect of the maritime sphere.

There are a number of maritime activities which the study does not consider. These include underwater exploration, marine wildlife and leisure activities including yachting or fishing for pleasure. This is largely dictated by the subjects of the films themselves. There are very few fictional films of the period that deal with these areas, and the actuality films, whilst reasonably numerous, are often not restricted to Britain.

There are some omissions which may be surprising. The thesis does not consider pirate films. O'Hara has demonstrated that in fiction, from Stevenson's *Treasure Island* to Barry's *Peter Pan*, pirate imagery had an impact on the national imagination.[40] This was not translated onto film and only a handful of British made pirate movies were produced over the entire period, some of which were contemporary scenarios rather than historic portrayals of swashbuckling pirates.[41] On

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[37] H. Mark Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain: The Hollywood British Film 1939-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 21.

[38] Ibid., p. 22. and Robert Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War* (London: Continuum, 2001), p. 14.

[39] Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain.*

[40] O'Hara, *Britain and the Sea*, pp. 44-46

[41] Pirate films were a popular genre in the United States and these films would have been released in the UK, so it can be expected that there was some impact on audience perceptions of general maritime narratives in the UK. The American films were often based on legendary British pirates such as Captain Kidd and famous characters from English literature and potentially offered a different view to the predominately conservative British film. There may also be a connection between the frequencies of historic smuggling films which could have been a British substitute for the American pirate film. This kind of comparison is however beyond the scope of this study. Treasure Island was adapted five times between 1900 and 1960 by American filmmakers in 1912, 1918, 1920, 1934 and 1950. There were no British productions until after 1960 and two of these were for television: *Treasure Island* television, (1968) and (1972), *Treasure Island* (1972, GB/FR/DE/ES).

this basis they do not form a major part of the discussion in this thesis. Likewise historic smuggling films are not analysed, although it is recognised that these may have played a role in identity in Cornwall, where the majority of them are set. Most of the historic smuggling films were made before 1920 or after 1960. Many of the early productions no longer exist, which makes it difficult to assess their exact nature and the later productions fall out of the time period of the thesis. Seaside films are not included in the study, although Walton's work has demonstrated that this subject has much to contribute to discussions of Britishness.[42] On film, however, the seaside setting is generally used as a device to examine characters behaviour out of their usual environment and away from the restrictions of their life. The emphasis is often on the land rather than the sea.

The nature of the films has also dictated the lack of discussions on major elements of identity. The most important of these are slavery, immigration and, with the exception of the masculine construction of naval identity, gender. Slavery receives limited attention in some historical productions such as *The Sea Hawk* and *Mutiny on the Bounty* (notably both American productions) but is otherwise neglected. Immigration does not form a basis for any of the films. The presence of women and their role is discussed in relation to individual films but forms the basis of only limited discussion in the thesis. As will be demonstrated, these films largely adhere to the dominant narratives of maritime history formulated in the Victorian period which primarily emphasised masculine roles. This has been addressed more recently with histories of women and the sea and in terms of gender and queer studies.[43] The films are in general dominated by portrayals of men particularly on board ship. There were more women on board ships than either the film or Victorian history implies. Women were of course heavily involved in maritime industries on shore, but this aspect is little reflected on film. Crews were essentially male and it is partly the nature of maritime tales that they are biased towards the masculine.

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[42] John K. Walton, *The English Seaside Resort: A Social History 1750-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983) and *The British Seaside: Holidays and Resorts in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000).

[43] For example: David Cordingly, *Heroines and Harlots: Women at Sea in the Great Age of Sail* (London: Macmillan, 2001); Lisabeth Paravisini-Gerbe and Yvette Romero-Cesareo (eds), *Women at Sea: Travel Writing and the Margins of Caribbean Discourse* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000); Jo Stanley, *Hello Sailor! Gay Life for Seamen* (London: Longman, 2003); Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (eds.) *Iron Men, Wooden Women: Gender and Seafaring in the Atlantic World, 1700 – 1920* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996).

3.3 Film appendices scope and use

The films on which this study is based are detailed in four appendices: Fiction Films, Non-Fiction Films, Ship Launches and World War Two Official Films. These have been compiled primarily from the BFI's Film and Television Database;[44] Alan Goble's CITWF Database;[45] Denis Gifford's *The British Film Catalogue, Fiction Film 1895-1994*[46] and *The British Film Catalogue, Non-Fiction Film 1888-1994.*[47] These form the basis for the statistics on frequency of films used in the thesis. The data compiled here exceeds that for any other consideration of maritime film.

The films included were all made by commercial companies and thus potentially had national release. In some respects the lists are conservative in that they only include films where the maritime sphere is the main subject or a lead character is a sailor. Sometimes a film is listed in sources that looks as if it may be a naval film, for example if it has 'lieutenant' or 'captain' in the title, but these films are often not obtainable, and unless it has been possible to establish that these were naval rather than army based they have not been added. In this respect they cannot be seen as comprehensive. The lists exclude nature, deep-sea diving and seaside films. The documentary list also excludes the numerous films of troop ships (mostly made during the Boer War) as these features primarily concerned the Army.

This study concentrates primarily on the influence of maritime culture as represented on commercial film. A useful companion piece would be a study of the Royal Navy in terms of its own publicity and recruitment campaigns. Where evidence is available this study notes Admiralty involvement in the production of film, although as will be seen such arrangements were most often conducted on an ad-hoc basis. This topic raises the interesting question of films' influence on recruitment to the navy, which may best be addressed at this point. Certainly, this study's analysis of the 1970s BBC

[44] BFI Film and TV Database, BFI, www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/ftvdb [accessed 28 May 2010]
[45] The Complete Index to World Film, http://www.citwf.com/index.htm [accessed 28 May 2010]
[46] Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue Volume 1: Fiction Film, 1895-1994*, 3rd Edition (London: Fitzroy Dearbourn, 2001).
[47] Denis Gifford, *The British Film Catalogue Volume 2: Non-Fiction Film, 1888-1994* (London: Fitzroy Dearbourn, 2000).

series *Warship* demonstrates that the Admiralty's motivation in co-operation was primarily one of recruitment. In terms of other productions this study has found limited documentary evidence to demonstrate that recruitment was a particular aim in supporting commercial film or figures to support a definitive answer as to the effects of commercial film on recruitment. Establishing answers to these questions requires a detailed analysis of recruitment figures in relation to Admiralty recruitment campaigns, social and political factors, the other armed forces and the requirements of the navy at any given point. It should also be noted that it was not until after 1945 that the navy experienced any significant difficulty in recruiting. For example, during the First World War they were able to muster enough manpower without resorting to conscription, and during the Second World War the navy was generally oversubscribed.[48] Even when pay and conditions were subjects to cuts during the Depression, resulting in strike action by the fleet at Invergordon, the navy was still a desirable option in the light of mass unemployment.[49] The invariably positive image of the navy as represented on film must be considered a contributory factor in encouraging recruits and the Admiralty would have been aware of this fact: beyond this however it is not possible to speculate on the evidence presented here.

4. Definitions and terminology

4.1 National Identity

The discussion of 'national identity' is necessarily complicated by the fact that there is no consensus on precisely what it means or what the constituent parts may be. The lack of work that fully integrates the maritime dimension in British national identity cannot be addressed in a thesis of this length: companion pieces for example on music, literature and other cultural forms would be illuminating. What is apparent from the work that exists is an agreement on the need for further analysis and the essentiality of the relationship between the nation and the sea.

[48] There was a dip in 1941 in terms of those volunteers who expressed a preference for joining the navy, and before this the navy was in competition with the RAF which attracted the greatest number of preferences but these are simply relative as there was not a point when the navy was unable to recruit in sufficient numbers during the Second World War. See Brian Lavery, *Hostilities Only: Training the Wartime Royal Navy* (London: Conway, 2011), pp. 23-25.
[49] Lavery, *Hostilities Only*, p. 12.

This thesis aims at tracing the process of the imaginative links between the maritime sphere and national over the twentieth century through film. 'Imaginative' draws from Benedict Anderson's notion of the 'imagined political community'.[50] It is a notion that has been drawn upon by many recent commentators on cultural practices and on film in particular.[51] It is a useful notion in the consideration of film because as Quilley observes, 'the definition of the nation as an "imagined political community" admits a potential for the functioning of non-verbal and non-literary signs and discourses in the construction of the idea of nation'.[52] Film mediates history for an audience and is necessarily imagined and re-imagined. Higson suggests that:

> Individual films will often serve to represent the nation to itself as a nation. Inserted into the general framework of the cinematic experience, such films will construct imaginary bonds which work to hold peoples of a nation together as a community by dramatizing their current fears, anxieties, conceits, pleasures and aspirations.[53]

The focus of this study is how films constructed such bonds between nation and the maritime sphere; that is the process by which identity was built and confirmed. Its interest is in tracing that process in a way never before attempted, rather than suggesting a new definition of national identity. It is important to understand that the thesis deals with identification with the maritime as a part of the imaginings of nation and not with actual maritime communities. That is, the primary emphasis is not on, for example, the Royal Navy's view of itself, the reality of the culture in port towns or shipbuilding communities, although, where appropriate, evidence is sometimes drawn from such settings.

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[50] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), p. 6.

[51] Higson, *Waving the Flag*, p. 6; Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 1; Geoff Quilley, 'The Image of the Sea in British Art', in Geoffrey Cubitt (ed.); *Imagining Nations* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 132; James Chapman, 'This Ship is England: History, Politics and National Identity in *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World* (2003)' in Chapman, Glancy and Harper (eds), *The New Film History*, p. 66.

[52] Quilley, 'The Image of the Sea in British Art', p. 132.

[53] Higson, *Waving the Flag*, p. 7.

4.2 Britain/ Englishness/ Britishness

As Keith Robbins discusses in his article 'The 'British' Space,' Britain as a term is problematic in terms of context (World/ Empire/ Continent/ Region/ Locality), definition, and historiographically.[54] He concludes that 'Whether the individual nations of the territories of the British Isles each has a 'core' and a 'periphery' or whether there has been and is only one insular 'core' and 'periphery' may not admit a single answer.[55] These problems have led some historians, most notably Kearney, to argue that it is only possible to understand the constituent territories of the United Kingdom through a four nation approach: 'no single 'national' interpretation, whether English, Irish, Scottish or Welsh, can be treated as self-contained. A 'Brittanic' framework is an essential starting point for a fuller understanding of these so-called 'national pasts'. So far no-one has attempted a systematic analysis of Britain's relationship with the sea through a four nations approach. This would be necessary for a full picture and crucial in examining the role of local maritime identities that are eclipsed by a monolithic 'national' story. This study as noted, essentially looks at identification *with* the maritime, not at actual maritime communities or culture within the navy. The tendency for this thesis to look at Britain as almost a nation-state, or at least to use the term 'nation' as meaning Britain is largely due to the way that it is used on film. This is because the majority of maritime films were made between 1900 and 1950 and most related in some way to major events that concerned the whole of the British Isles; primarily the two world wars. The consequence was, as will be seen, that most of the films promote a unity of the constituent parts of Britain.

The frequent and unconscious conflation of 'English' and 'British', in addition to the complicated and changing relationships between the constituent parts of the British Isles always makes definitions and discussion of Britishness problematic. The choice of 'British' national identity in this case should not be taken as assuming a universal a response but rather as suggesting that notions of a maritime identity had resonance across the country, even if they did not enjoy total acceptance. The notion that such mythic symbols might be more important because of their widespread recognition

[54] Keith Robbins, 'The 'British Space': World-Empire-Continent-Nation-Region-Locality: A Historiographical Problem' *History Compass* 7/1 (2009), pp. 66-94.
[55] Ibid., p. 82.

than because of their uncontested dominance is one that has been explored elsewhere, for example in analyses of the 'myth of the Blitz'.[56]

In the first three quarters of the twentieth century the conflation of Britishness and Englishness was much more common than it has now become, but even so it remained a topic of discussion. As Rüger points out, naval debate at the start of the period over the use of the White Ensign, dominated by the cross of St George with the Union Flag in its first quarter, indicated an awareness of the potential political sensitivity of this subject. Although the flag was retained, despite protests from Scotland and Ireland, a new ship naming policy did attempt to foster stronger local connections with naval vessels. Traditionally these had been named after classical gods, but in the run up to the First World War more regional names were used, so that by 1914 more than a third of vessels had Scottish, Welsh or Irish connections. Whereas before 1912, a hymn sung at ships' launches included the words 'may England's sons, her destined crew/ Be men of might, brave hearts and true,'[57] after that point the key phrase became 'Britain's sons'.[58]

Nonetheless, in fictional features, as in most popular discourse, there was a strong bias towards the portrayal of England and the English, and as Rattigan comments: 'Only occasionally, and with more than a hint of tokenism, did they remember to include the "Celtic Fringe" of Britain in their images of national identity'.[59]

The general conservatism of the maritime films and their tendency to underplay regional identity may lead to a conclusion that they have more to say about specifically English culture and characteristics (although, as there is no way of establishing an objective list of what these characteristics were for any particular region of the United Kingdom, this is problematic). Although this thesis argues that the ellipsis is due to an aim to promote a unified Britain on screen in response to

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[56] For example in Mark Connelly, *We Can Take It! Britain and the memory of the Second World War* (Harlow: Longman, 2004) and Angus Calder, *The Myth of the Blitz* (London: Pimlico, 1992).

[57] Hymn by L .M. Sabine Pasley in *Service to be used at the Launching of Ships of His Majesty's Navy* (London, 1902).

[58] Jan Rüger, 'Nation, Empire and the Navy: Identity Politics in the United Kingdom 1887-1914', *Past and Present*, 185 (2004), p. 172.

[59] Neil Rattigan, *This is England: British Film and the People's War, 1939-1945* (London: Associated University Presses, 2001), p. 15.

particular political and social situations. It is however, possible to identify certain characteristics that are most prominently displayed in film. Richards in *Films and British National Identity* gives some clues, as Medhurst[60] also notes, for example: 'tolerance, compromise, law abidingness, individualism, anti-intellectualism,'[61] 'honour, duty, service, decency, selflessness,'[62] 'chivalry and sportsmanship,'[63] 'tolerance, fairplay and restraint'[64] and (particularly with regards to the Blitz) that the British were: 'courageous, stoic and good humoured'.[65] Medhurst questions whether these are primarily English characteristics – the subject of a debate but does not dispute that these values are recognisable. They were present in a range of British films during this period and in maritime films in particular.

This thesis argues that the way maritime history was configured by the Victorians exercised an extended influence over its representation in the twentieth century and this is born out in the films of the period. Dodd argues that during the period from 1880 up until the early part of the twentieth century that 'Englishness and the "English spirit" were the preoccupation not only of the political culture, but what we might call the institutions and practices of cultural policies'.[66] Englishness was the dominant culture, and Dodd concludes that various peoples of the United Kingdom 'were invited to take their place, and become spectators of a culture already complete and represented for them by its trustees'.[67] Other than Parliament, Dodd takes these trustees to be institutions such as the ancient universities and the Anglican Church. As will be seen in the first chapter, maritime imagery and history fitted squarely into the dominant view and were deliberately allied to the establishment. This did not, however, preclude the flourishing of separate maritime identities, or indeed the efforts of the Royal Navy to be demonstrably more inclusive.

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[60] Andy Medhurst, *A National Joke: Popular Comedy and English Cultural Identities* (Routledge: London, 2007), p. 43.
[61] Richard, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 17.
[62] Ibid., p. 19.
[63] Ibid., p. 20.
[64] Ibid., p. 25.
[65] Ibid., p. 17.
[66] Philip Dodd, 'Englishness and the National Culture', in Colls and Dodd (eds), *Englishness: Politics and Culture*, p. 1.
[67] Ibid., p .22.

With caution it can be assumed that in maritime films of this period, the use of the word 'English' was often intended to refer to the whole nation. The complexity hidden behind this blurring of English and British is symptomatic of what Higson sees as inevitable, that: 'The shared, collective identity which is implied always masks a whole range of internal differences and potential and actual antagonisms'.[68]

The choice of a discussion of 'Britain' is not meant to imply that there was a homogeneous response throughout England, Scotland and Wales towards a maritime identity. It can be argued that a maritime identity was one that has resonance across Britain, even if some symbols are read differently in different regions. This thesis will discuss Britain as a mental territory rather than as a homogeneous state.

4.3 Propaganda

Propaganda, Reeves has suggested 'takes place whenever an individual or a small group attempts to influence the attitudes and behaviour of the many, and is therefore not an activity that can occur without intention.'[69] This is largely the definition that this thesis adheres to and where possible the thesis indicates agencies involved in the production of films. Intention is not always clear cut, affected as it could be by, for example by commercial and social factors or Government policies. Pronay has argued, in respect of the news during wartime that 'Its aim is to persuade through affecting the balance of information which reaches the public through omissions.' [70] This could be equally applied to the wider uses of film beyond news distribution. This thesis will show that the view of the maritime sphere promoted in film was achieved as much by omission as by positive portrayal.

5. Structure and Outline of the thesis

5.1 Structure

[68] Higson, *Waving the Flag*, p. 4.
[69] Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda*, p. 12.
[70] Nicholas Pronay, 'The News Media at War' in Nicholas Pronay and D. W. Spring (eds), *Propaganda, Politics and Film, 1918-1945* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 173.

The thesis begins by tracing the origins of key concepts associated with a maritime identity to establish the configuration of maritime history in popular culture at the beginning of the twentieth century. It then examines the importance of maritime film production during the period 1900-1939; the representation of shipbuilding from the 1930s; the use of maritime scenarios in Second World War film propaganda; maritime comedies; and post-war maritime films. It concludes by suggesting the reasons for a decline in interest in the maritime film at the end of this period. The thesis follows an essentially chronological structure although each chapter draws upon earlier and later film productions. Both the chapter on shipbuilding and the chapter on comedy overarch the period as these groups of films have distinctive courses of development that need to be examined in looking at the full picture of maritime film.

5.2 Outline

Chapter 1: The Cult of the Navy

This chapter concentrates on the period between the 1890s and 1918. It argues first that the images of the navy on screen both developed and relied upon previous imagery of the navy in other art forms. Second, that the result was a particular view of the navy that created a shared body of ideas drawing a line of continuity between the imagined past and the present. Third, that the role of film has been underestimated in the spread of the 'cult of the navy' especially with regards to the working classes..In order to explain the use of maritime imagery in the cult of the navy this chapter considers pre-cinematic representations of the navy and therefore does not follow a strict chronology. It considers the causes of the cult of the navy and Victorian historians' configuration of maritime history before looking at the scope and content of early maritime films. The chapter looks at the role of the seaman in expressing British national characteristics and finishes by with a discussion of naval propaganda during the First World War.

Chapter 2: The Navy's Here

This chapter concentrates on the interwar period. It argues first that the use of the navy was part of a conscious dialogue on the representation of the nation on film and how it might be used in education during this period. Second, that the representation of the navy on screen was clearly drawn from the configuration of history and values that had been developed as part of the cult of the navy. Third, that the films of this period are essential in understanding those made during the Second World War and their influence has been underestimated by historians of film and of national identity. The chapter looks first at the relationship between film and national identity in the period between 1918 and 1939 before considering the involvement of the Admiralty with film production. It then turns to four case studies which focus on historical films and look at representations of Drake, Nelson and Captain Bligh over the first third of the twentieth century. The final section considers representations of the navy during First World War with a case study of *Forever England* (1935).

Chapter 3: This is the Story of a Ship

This chapter is primarily concerned with the representation of the shipbuilding industry on screen although it also draws upon representations of other maritime industries. It argues first that the filming of ship launches was a significant factor in the promotion of Britain's industry abroad and unity at home. Before the 1930s this was the main way in which the public were made aware of shipbuilding but this changed with the emergent documentary movement which prioritised the worker rather than the finished product. Second it argues that regional identities within shipbuilding films were secondary to issues of class and the projection of a united Britain. It is argued that the fictional shipyard feature was directly influenced by the aesthetic ideals and socialist principles of the documentary movement. This mode of representation for the maritime industries was remarkably consistent. The chapter also contends that the industrial maritime sphere remained a relatively unexplored area on film in comparison with the navy and that this was a result of the dominant Victorian narrative of British maritime history. The case studies look at the small cluster of fictional shipbuilding films made between 1943 and 1946 and the use of the industry in the MoI shorts made during the Second World War. The last section of the chapter looks at later productions in order to place the case studies in full context.

Chapter 4: Dunkirk Spirit

This chapter considers the use of the navy in the propaganda films of the Second World War. The central argument is that while these films have been the subject of much academic focus two elements have been underestimated in relation to the naval film. First, insufficient attention has been paid to the films made prior to 1939. Second, the influence of detailed shifts in public perception that occurred in relation to naval events during the war has been underestimated. In particular it pays attention to the precise points at which films were released and the considerable impact that this had on their reception. The chapter considers civilian attitudes towards the navy before looking at the naval films released in the early part of the war through the case study of *For Freedom* (1940). It argues that the significance of the film to contemporary audiences has been misunderstood because it has subsequently been considered a failure by recent historians. The chapter then considers the effect of the myth of Dunkirk through a comparison of two MoI shorts: one released in 1940 and the other in 1943 which both represent the evacuation. The last case study turns to *In Which We Serve* (1942) as the most iconic naval film of the war, and reconsiders previous interpretations of the circumstances surrounding its production and release.

Chapter 5: A Girl in Every Port

This chapter considers the comedy film with particular reference to the character of 'Jack Tar' from 1900–1960. First it argues that maritime comedies have been largely neglected by film historians and often by contemporary film critics. Their role in the relationship between the sea and national identity has therefore been underestimated. As with the films of the Second World War the chapter demonstrates that it is necessary to consider early interpretations in understanding later productions. Second the chapter argues that the comedies often embraced characters that were not present in the serious maritime films. In particular, these scenarios were nearly always told from the perspective of the lower deck. Nevertheless, they tended to promote a conservative and benign view of the navies. It shows that there was an extraordinary level of consistency in comedy throughout the period in both style and subject. Notably the comedies almost invariably had contemporary settings and tended to

respond to contemporary issues. The chapter traces the 'Jack Tar' figure through eighteenth century portrayals to the Victorian music hall before turning to the case studies and demonstrates the persistence of the character through to the end of the twentieth century. The films chosen for the case studies represent pre-war, wartime and post-war comedy.

Chapter 6: The Cruel Sea

This chapter looks at the post-war period from 1946–1960. It shows that the proliferation of maritime drama remained undiminished although critics, for the first time, began to express weariness with the subject. Contemporary commentators perceived an increase in the number of maritime film that were produced but statistics show that the number remained congruent with the numbers made before the Second World War. The chapter argues that although this was a transitional period there was still a level of consistency and continuity in the nature of maritime films. It also demonstrates that the films that presented the navy in the most traditional light tended to be amongst those that were best received. The chapter contends that, while non-comedy maritime films continued to be much concerned with contemporary social issues, they represented the contemporary navy less and less. Instead there was a backward glance which was predominately focussed on a recasting of the Second World War. These issues are explored through three double case studies which enable a comparative analysis of both the more traditional and the newer manifestations of the navies on screen. In particular they cover three aspects of the period. First the films that dealt with the navy in peacetime, second, those that represented the navy in wartime and third, representations of the Merchant Navy.

Epilogue

The epilogue considers the period between 1960 and 2000 and in particular the sharp decline in the maritime industries, the navy and in the numbers of cinematic portrayals of the maritime sphere. It points to possible reasons for the virtual disappearance of the British maritime world on the big screen related to changes in the maritime sphere, the film industry and the rise of television. It argues that the representation of the maritime on screen became increasingly divorced from the

contemporary Royal Navy and the maritime industries. Instead major productions tended to focus on Britain's past maritime glory. These issues are explored by a consideration of the 1970s television series, *Warship* and *The Onedin Line* and the later adaptations of C. S. Forester's *Hornblower* series of books and Patrick O'Brian's *Master and Commander*.

Conclusions

The thesis closes with four main conclusions. First, that the representation of the maritime sphere was a major part of cinematic discourse in the first half of the twentieth century; and that this has been underestimated due to a concentration of academic study on films from the Second World War onwards. Second, that the relationship between Britain and the sea as envisaged in the Victorian and Early Edwardian period enjoyed a remarkable longevity and was a key component in the promotion of 'Britishness'. Third that representations of the maritime industries and comedic maritime films have been neglected by film historians but this study demonstrates that they are crucial to an understanding of the representation of the maritime world. Fourth it suggests that the methodological approach taken here, by drawing upon a wider selection of maritime films than any prior study over a long duration challenges some of the shortcomings of considering film in a discrete time period.

Chapter 1: The Cult of the Navy

1. Introduction

The beginning of the nineteenth century saw an unprecedented focus on the navy contemporaneously described as 'the cult of the navy'. At the same time the fledgling film industry immediately embraced the maritime world resulting in a proliferation of representations of the sea on screen between 1895 and 1918. This chapter outlines the reasons why these dual phenomena came together with such potency in this period and examines their impact on shaping and informing issues of national identity and popular culture. It suggests that the role of film within the cult of the navy has been under-represented in previous studies; especially with regards to the dissemination of naval propaganda amongst the working classes.

The first part of this chapter looks at the number and type of maritime films produced between 1895 and 1919 along with the growth of cinema. As the political and cultural spectrum at this time had a fundamental influence on the representation of the maritime sphere throughout the twentieth century the reasons why the navy becomes so prominent are then considered. This is followed by a section on the role of Victorian historians in shaping a national history which had profound influence on the perception of maritime history. In order to understand the use of maritime history in the national story the chapter looks back to previous representations and thought on the maritime world: in particular by looking at the character of the seaman in the discussion of national character. The chapter then turns to look at film productions and their role in the cult of the navy in more detail and their use as propaganda during the First World War.

2. The Output of Maritime Films between 1895 and 1918

Up until the end of the First World War maritime actuality shorts were a prominent category of films which numbered well over 500 productions.[71] These were dominated by films of the Royal Navy, which accounted for more than half of all types of maritime film. In addition there were at least a further 220 fictional maritime films made, where again the Royal Navy was the largest single category. These figures do not include the thousands of feet of naval footage produced for newsreels after their introduction in 1910.[72] The numbers of films were not evenly distributed over the years, but nevertheless these figures equate to at least one film of a maritime subject made for every week between 1895 and 1918.

The film industry grew with remarkable speed. Before 1910 public appetite for film had grown through exhibition in fairgrounds and the music hall. Hiley's research demonstrates that the proliferation of dedicated cinemas, which built up from 2900 in 1910 to 5400 by 1915, were frequented almost exclusively by the working classes. The 3.5 million tickets sold per week in1911 more than doubled by 1915 and reached 21 million by 1917.[73]

Despite the immediate appearance of a great number of maritime films reaching a significantly large working class audience their role has not been fully recognised in previous studies. Films do not play a part Hamilton's analysis of the operation and agencies involved in the naval cause in the early part of the twentieth century.[74] This is in spite of the fact that many of those same agencies were directly or indirectly responsible for the promotion of the navy on screen. The contribution of film in furthering the cult of the navy is recognised in Rüger's work although it is not examined at great length, and concerns only actuality films featuring the Royal

[71] This figure could be significantly higher in terms of individual films as many titles were in fact a programme of films which could also be hired separately. Where possible this is indicated in the film appendices.
[72] Pathe and Gaumont began making newsreels in Britain in 1910 followed by Topical Budget in 1911.
[73] Nicholas Hiley, 'The British Cinema Auditorium', in Karel Dibbets and Bert Hogenkamp (eds), *Film and the First World War*, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1995), pp. 160-162.
[74] Hamilton, *The Nation and Navy.*

Navy.[75] Fictional films, and non-naval maritime films are not considered, yet these were also widely distributed and contributed significantly to the idea of a national maritime culture.

The prolific output of maritime films was one of the key manifestations of the so-called 'cult of the navy.' The popular appeal of the sea reached every strata of society. It is not difficult to point to numerous Victorian examples of a maritime culture represented in the works of contemporary artists such as Turner, Elgar[76] and Newbolt.[77] These went alongside more popular cultural representations, including the figure of 'Jack Tar' as an enduring music hall favourite, sentimental prints of the 'sailor's goodbye,' the dressing of children in sailor suits and cigarette advertising.[78] Most of these cultural manifestations, including film were deliberately patriotic in nature. This early concentration on maritime subjects on film, and the immediate use of maritime imagery as a signifier of nation was only meaningful and possible by the osmosis of deep-rooted pre-existing ideas about Britain's relationship with the sea.

The navy became important at the latter end of the nineteenth century for two major reasons. The first was a matter of practicality and Britain's world status. That is the concern that the navy would remain strong enough in the face of foreign competition to continue its traditional roles: as the first line of defence both militarily and in terms of trade protection. Essentially these were linked to Britain's standing in the world order: its naval supremacy and its prosperity through trade and empire. The second related reason was a response to the rise of tension and nationalism across Europe in the latter half of the nineteenth century whereby matters of national identity came to the fore. Building upon Britain's long held notions of identification with the sea the navy became a potent symbol of nation and its sailors an embodiment of the ideals of British character. Before considering the interplay of film with these issues it is

[75] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, pp. 52-53, 64-65, 78-79.
[76] For example: *Sea Pictures* 1899.
[77] For example: *Admirals All: and Other Verses*, (London: Elkin Matthews, 1897).
[78] For a discussion on sailor suits see Clare Rose, 'The Meanings of the Late Victorian Sailor Suit', *Journal for Maritime Research*, June 2009 (unpaginated), www.jmr.ac.uk/server/show/Conjmr.270 [accessed 16 March 2010]. Matthew Hilton notes that nearly all cigarette companies in 1901 had a type of 'Navy Cut', and looks at military influences on cigarette advertising in 'Advertising, the Modernist Aesthetic of the Marketplace? The Cultural Relationship between the Tobacco Manufacturer and the 'Mass' Consumers in Britain, 1870-1940' in Martin Daunton and Bernhard Rieger (eds), *Meanings of Modernity: Britain from the Late-Victorian Era to World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), pp. 45-70.

necessary to first outline the causes of the cult of the navy. Secondly it is essential to consider the Victorian casting of national history and of maritime history within it, to understand how film became a major agent in the spread of the cult of the navy.

3. Reasons for the Cult of the Navy: Nationalism and the naval threat

The cult of the navy was the result of a complex culmination of political, geo-political, academic, historical, and social factors. The primary reason for the navy coming to the forefront of parliamentary and public discussion was the wider political tension felt across Europe in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In the broad context this gave rise to a period of intense nationalism and more particularly to a naval arms race.

The defeat of Napoleon in 1815 left Britain as the pre-eminent power in Europe with the strongest navy in the world. For the next forty years the perception of navy's role became as much a bastion of peace 'the policemen of the world', the shield of empire and the first line of defence rather than one of aggression.[79] Although the navy remained essentially unchallenged until the onset of the First World War, anxieties over conflict with France surfaced again the 1850s. Napoleon III reignited French ambitions of expansion, prompting the British Government to invest heavily in defence.

From the late 1860s, another threat began to emerge with the rise of the German Empire. Unified after a successful war against the Austrian Empire, in 1866, and a shockingly swift defeat of France, in 1870, the German states and the Kingdom of Prussia together formed a powerful new Empire in Europe. An intensification of national feeling across the continent was driven in part by this shift in the balance of power. From the very end of the nineteenth century, this resulted in the beginning of a period of intense navalism throughout Europe that would continue until the outbreak of the First World War.

[79] See Behrman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea* especially pp. 111-135.

The rise of the German navy was remarkable.[80] The first navy act was passed in 1898 and, within little more than a decade, the Germans had built the second largest battle fleet in the world from scratch. These events sparked paranoid fears of infiltration by spies and anarchists fuelled in the public imagination by the press and a proliferation of popular novels and short stories that speculated on potential invasions.[81] In turn many of the early cinematic portrayals of the navy represented this concern.

Within Europe the German naval expansion was the most dramatic but Japan and the United States were also developing their navies at a previously unprecedented rate. The experience of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, when the Japanese wiped out the Russian fleet at the battle of Tsushima, demonstrated the power of new technology especially mines and torpedoes. From the 1890s onwards all these brought questions of investment in, and the armament of, the Royal Navy to the forefront of both Parliamentary and public debate.

Hamilton dates what he refers to as the 'new navalism' to the 1899 Defence Act when the British government committed to a five year naval expansion programme and for the first time formally instituted the two power standard.[82] The two power standard had in fact been a guiding principle in naval policy for many years and so this formalisation must be seen as a reiterated assertion of power abroad and a statement of reassurance at home. Naval estimates vastly increased over the next decade. This was not only because of the costs of keeping pace with new technological developments but because simultaneously these same developments rapidly rendered much of the existing fleet obsolete.

As this suggests a primary impetus behind the focus on naval affairs was the government alongside the Admiralty which is confirmed by Hamilton's research. There was a deliberate promotion of the navy by the state underlined by a firm

[80] For further discussion of the naval arms race with Germany see for example: Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain and Germany and the Coming of the Great War* (London: Random House, 1991); Paul G. Halpern, *A Naval History of World War One* (London: Routledge, 1995) and Rüger, *The Great Naval Game.*

[81] See for example Antulio J. Echevarria, *Imagining Future War: The West's Technological Revolution and Visions of War to Come, 1880-1914* (Westport: Praeger, 2007) especially p. 50 and Wesley K. Wark, *Spy Fiction, Spy Films and Real Intelligence* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 1.

[82] Hamilton, *The Nation and the Navy,* p. 357.

linkage to the monarchy in the form of naval reviews. This pageantry was again a projection of British power as much for the benefit of foreign nations as it was for reassurance at home. Although successful, this form of state propaganda did not alone ensure consensus over naval spending either within parliament or amongst the public. This led to interventions by pro-navy groups such as the Navy League, historians, sections of the press and indeed cinematographers.[83] It was also crucially underpinned by a revitalising of national history which emphatically emphasised the role of the navy, monarchy and the sailor in the formation, development and success of the state. It is essential to consider the role of the historians to understand how these factors came together in the cult of the navy.

4. The Maritime and the Writing of National History

4.1 The Victorian Historians

One of the most significant factors in the nature of the representation of the maritime world on screen was the Victorian interpretation of British history. These interpretations resonated in the representation of the maritime on film even at the end of the twentieth century. Just as importantly the standing of history changed radically at the end of the nineteenth century which in part ensured the longevity of particular views of the past. Recurrent concerns about naval strength and capacity interacted with notions of national history and identity. The rise of nationalism encouraged the writing of national histories which had profound implications for the understanding of maritime history as central to the formation of nation.

The late nineteenth century Europe-wide rise in nationalism encouraged a growing interest in history and heritage. This manifested itself in the gathering of national collections and public museums. In Britain this was reflected in the collection and display of maritime artefacts. This began in earnest after the success of the International Exhibition in 1862 in Kensington. It culminated in the establishment of a national collection housed at the Royal Naval College Greenwich, previously the Royal Hospital for Seamen, which had held a national gallery of naval art since 1823.

[83] See Hamilton, *The Nation and the Navy*, especially pages 355-384.

By 1910, the Society for Nautical Research had been established with the specific aim of turning this collection into a national naval museum. The coalescence of naval heritage with national identity was furthered by historians such as Julian Corbett, John Knox Laughton and Alfred Thayer Mahan who were establishing naval history as a separate area of academic study.

Their work coincided with and exemplified a move by British historians to follow the European trend and create a 'national story' which would be conveyed to a wider audience through readable popular histories.[84] History was unprecedentedly popular in this period,[85] not only in quasi-academic formats, but also in such creative formats as pageants and historical novels.[86] Nor were these the only ways in which 'historical' information could reach the masses. The perceived importance of history was apparent in the introduction of the subject as a compulsory element of the curriculum for secondary schools in 1900. While the school curriculum was not as circumscribed as it became over the course of the twentieth century, this was the first point at which a nation of schoolchildren could be said to be reading from the same page. Significantly, they did so at a point when the state of the navy, past and present, became a topic of repeated popular discussion. As Feske has suggested the implementation of a common curriculum helped to bring upper and middle class values closer together. The Victorian intellectual elite 'besides erasing boundaries between the intelligentsia and members of the political class, a uniform educational pattern combined with occupational overlap among the upper and middle classes to instil a common set of assumptions.'[87]

The interest in history fuelled by the impulse towards nationalism gave wide exposure to the works of historians such as Edward Freeman, William Stubbs, John Seeley and James Froude, allowing them to exercise a profound influence on the narrative of nationhood.[88] Their positions at Oxford and Cambridge indicated both a

[84] See Peter Mandler, *History and National Life* (London: Profile Books, 2002), pp. 11-12, and J. W. Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*: *Victorian Historians and the National Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 286.
[85] Mandler, *History and National Life*, p. 76.
[86] David Cannadine, *Making History Now and Then: Discoveries, Controversies, Explorations* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 22.
[87] Victor Feske, *From Belloc to Churchill: private scholars, public culture and the crisis of British Liberalism* (Chapel Hill, London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), p. 4.
[88] See Mandler *History and National Life*, and Burrow, *A Liberal Descent*.

professionalization of historical study and the developing belief that the ancient universities were 'custodians of national culture'.[89] In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, they set out to construct a national story not as an intellectual exercise, but because they believed that it was their duty to provide inspiration at home and to project British power abroad. Thanks to the establishment of history on the school curriculum, their interpretation became particularly significant. Cannadine suggests that, 'by the early twentieth century, knowledge of the past was deemed to be essential, not only for exercising British citizenship, but also for practising British statesmanship'.[90] Existing cultural trends, the domestic political climate and the international situation all meant that naval history played a major part in that national story.

The shared national knowledge of the past was based upon a chronological framework established in part by references to particular naval events. The Anglo-Saxon King Alfred, supposedly the 'father of the navy', was the progenitor of Drake's ability to repel the Armada, which in turn foreshadowed Nelson's victory at Trafalgar. In particular, as Armitage has argued, these histories rooted Britain's imperial mission and the maritime supremacy on which it depended in the Elizabethan Age.[91] The Elizabethan period was cast as the origin of the nation. Elizabethan sea-dogs were seen to have paved the way for colonial and trade expansion, in the process both demonstrating the need for, and inaugurating the development of, a powerful navy.

Froude's work proved the most significant in the development of a popular maritime history intertwined with the grand narrative of national identity and empire. In his *History of England from the fall of Wolsey to the defeat of the Spanish Armada* (1856-1870) Froude had explored 'the expansive force which has spread the Anglo-Saxon race all over the globe' and located the origins of the modern navy in Henry VIII and Elizabeth I's defence of the nation against the forces of the Counter-Reformation.[92] In the lectures that Froude gave on taking up the regius professorship at Oxford, he chose the English seamen of the sixteenth century as a distinct topic. These lectures

[89] Dodd, 'Englishness and the National Culture', p. 4.
[90] Cannadine, *Making History Now and Then*, p. 22.
[91] David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 6, p.100.
[92] James Anthony Froude, *History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the defeat of the Spanish Armada* (London: 1856); Behrman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea*, pp. 78-79.

were published in 1895 and ran in to a second edition in the same year.[93] Froude's introduction shows both the inter-changeability of 'England' and 'Britain' in the era in which he wrote and the degree to which he drew on existing connections between the nation and the sea:

> Jean Paul, the German poet, said that God had given to France the empire of the land, to England the empire of the sea, and to his own country the empire of the air. The world has changed since Jean Paul's days. The wings of France have been clipped; the German Empire has become a solid thing; but England still holds her watery dominion; Britannia does still rule the waves, and in this proud position she has spread the English race over the globe; she has created the great American nation; she is peopling new Englands at the Antipodes; she has made her Queen Empress of India; and is in fact the very considerable phenomenon in the social and political world which all acknowledge her to be. And all this she has achieved in the course of three centuries, entirely in consequence of her predominance as an ocean power. Take away her merchant fleets; take away the navy that guards them: her empire will come to an end; her colonies will fall off, like leaves from a withered tree; and Britain will become once more an insignificant island in the North Sea...[94]

Here he drew upon ideas that had existed in English and British histories stretching back as far as the sixteenth century, in particular by the suggestion in the first line that the sea was a British birthright.[95] Similarly in his bestselling book, *Oceana; or England and her Colonies*, Froude explicitly referred to Sir James Harrington's 1656 utopian vision *The Commonwealth of Oceana*, an argument in favour of maritime expansion produced for Oliver Cromwell.[96] In the same book, Froude commented

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[93] A. F. Pollard, 'Froude, James Anthony (1818-1894)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10202 [accessed 3 February 2011].

[94] James Anthony Froude, *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century: Lectures Delivered at Oxford Easter Terms 1893-4* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1903), p. 1.

[95] In particular Richard Hakluyt, one of a number of well-connected English Protestant clerics who documented England's trading exploits at sea in the order to further the cause of colonial expansion, had claimed both English supremacy at sea and that that the English had a 'natural' ability at sea in *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* 3 vols. (Edinburgh 1884, First Published London: 1598-1600), p. 4-5. The work was significant as the first extended text that dealt solely with England's seafaring history. More importantly, it was a deliberately patriotic work that was to a large degree state sponsored: its lineage provides clues to the conscious creation of a 'maritime nation'. (See discussion in James P. Helfers, 'The Explorer or Pilgrim? Modern Critical Opinion and the Editorial Methods of Richard Hakluyt and Samuel Purchas', *Studies in Philology*, 94/2 (1997), pp. 160-186.) The book's production capitalised upon the popularity of the Spanish Wars and, as Armitage suggests, Hakluyt formalised the links between 'trade, religion and conquest as essential parts of the same enterprise'. (*Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, p. 75).

[96] James Anthony Froude, *Oceana: or England and her Colonies* (Leipzig: Bernard Tauchnitz, 1887 First published London: Longman Green & Co, 1886), p. 7; see Bernhard Klein, 'The Natural Home of the Englishmen: Froude's Oceana and the Writing of the Sea', in Robert Burden and Stephan Kohl (eds), *Landscape and Englishness: Spatial Practices 1* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006), pp. 105- 106.

that 'After their own island, the sea is the natural home of Englishmen'.[97] Again, this drew upon long held notions suggested by Richard Hakluyt in his work *Principal Navigations* first published in 1589. Klein has also suggested that Froude was referring directly to John Selden's statement in *Mare Clausum* that the sea was a 'national terrain or property in exclusive possession of the English'.[98]

In an influential review of Hakluyt Society[99] publications, 'England's Forgotten Worthies', Froude explicitly foregrounded the exploits of the Elizabethan mariners Francis Drake, Walter Ralegh, Sir Richard Grenville, Sir Humphrey Gilbert and John Davis. In the same review, Froude famously pronounced Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* 'the Prose Epic of the modern English nation'.[100] Froude's use of Hakluyt was however very selective. It concentrated only upon the Protestant Elizabethan sailors, and ignored the numerous mercantilist tales that in fact made up the bulk of his work. Hakluyt's combination of colonialism and Protestantism in a deliberately patriotic text fitted very well with Froude's perceptions of a benign imperial mission and Whiggish belief in continual social improvement.[101] Froude regarded Catholicism with scepticism and Anglican Protestantism as progressive.[102] In his lecture on Hawkins, any moral question about piracy was swept aside by blaming Catholicism,

> If the King of Spain and his Holiness at Rome would have allowed other nations to think and make laws for themselves, pirates and privateers would have disappeared off the ocean. The West Indies would have been left

[97] Froude, *Oceana*, p. 26. The historian E. A. Freeman also said of the English that '...we came as folk of the sea to whom the sea was not a mere path but a true home' quoted in Behrman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea*, p. 57.

[98] Klein, 'The Natural Home of the Englishman', p. 113. The jurist John Selden, in particular played an important role in promoting a British appropriation of the sea in his 1618 work *Mare Clausum.* Selden wrote the text as a rejoinder to Dutch jurist Hugo Grotius' work *Mare Liberum.* The Grotian vision was of 'the free ocean – a mercantilist, international, inexhaustible space….' (Christopher L. Connery, 'Ideologies of Land and Sea: Alfred Thayer Mahan, Carl Schmitt and the Shaping of Global Myth Elements' *Boundary* 82/2 (2001), p. 178). Selden's text was a defence of the idea of national jurisdiction or sovereignty over sea spaces, and that it could be appropriated in the same way as terrestrial space. Selden's text might have remained obscure, but in 1635 it was published with government sponsorship to justify the extension of the Ship Levy to inland counties.

[99] Founded in 1846 the aim of the Hakluyt Society was to bring his work to a modern audience.

[100] James Anthony Froude, 'England's Forgotten Worthies', in Richard Wilson (ed.), *The English Admirals* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1923), p. 30. First published in *The Westminster Review*, 2/1 (1852).

[101] Froude was in fact a Tory historian but in this respect of increasing civilisation he represented a view more commonly associated with a Whig configuration of history.

[102] Behrman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea*, pp. 78-79.

> undisturbed, and Spanish, English, French and Flemings would have lived peacefully side by side...[103]

In his construction of a righteous Protestant England, Froude presented a scenario of good against evil, in which England (and hence subsequently Britain) fought for the benefit of the entire world. The main agency of this fight had been, and was still the navy: an interpretation that had particular resonance in an era when the Royal Navy had involved itself in the policing of the slave trade.[104] Froude enlisted Hakluyt's heroes too in his narrative of national resistance, concluding his lecture on the defeat of the Armada by stating that: 'My own theme has been the poor Protestant adventurers who fought through that perilous week in the English Channel and saved their country and their country's liberty'.[105]

This recasting of earlier texts had two vital consequences. First, it encouraged a shift of emphasis away from the mercantile and towards the naval as the key component of Britain's maritime identity. Second, it enshrined a version of 'poor Protestants' standing as underdogs against the might of an invading enemy, an image that would have particular significance during the invasion scares of the two world wars in the twentieth century; feeding into the idea of an 'island nation'. Froude was therefore a significant figure because of his belief that the success of the nation could be traced back to maritime achievements that had defined Britain's place in the world. Crucially he revivified ideas about nation and sea that had their origins in the sixteenth century and which emphasised the idea of Britain's 'natural' propensity for seapower. He placed an emphasis on the figure of the seaman whose characteristics would come to express ideal national characteristics. Moreover, his work influenced a range of other cultural texts that enjoyed wide dissemination.

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[103] Froude, *English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 66.

[104] O'Hara contends that 'anti-slavery opinion was entrenched as a matter of secular faith in Britishness'. Furthermore he argues that the combined effect of the repeal of both the Corn Laws (1846) and the Navigation Acts (1849) had repercussions for national identity. In breaking down the mercantilist closed shop structure Free Trade promoted a more 'democratic' culture: this was not a self-serving but related to the idea of the policeman of the seas in making the ocean a better place for commerce benefiting all trading nations. See O'Hara, *Britain and the Sea*, p. 80 and Frank Trentman, *Free Trade Nation: Commerce, Consumption, Civil Society and Modern Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 33, pp. 53-4, p. 100.

[105] Froude, 'English Seamen in the Sixteenth Century', p. 309.

Leonee Ormond's article 'The Spacious Times of Great Elizabeth' demonstrates how Froude's writing inspired three of the most enduring Victorian images of the Elizabethan: Charles Kingsley's children's novel *Westward Ho!*, Millais's painting *Boyhood of Ralegh* and Tennyson's poem *The Revenge.*[106] Kingsley borrowed Froude's own copy of Hakluyt's *Principal Navigations* for his research on Drake.[107] Millais's painting is clearly drawn from Froude's idyllic, almost whimsical description of the young Ralegh:

> Humphrey and Adrian Gilbert, with their half brother, Walter Raleigh, here [near the port of Dartmouth] when little boys, played at sailors in the reaches of the Long Stream; in the summer evenings doubtless rowing down with the tide to the port, and wondering at the quaint figure heads and carved prows of the ships which thronged it; or climbed on board and listening, with hearts beating, to the mariners' tales of the new earth beyond the sunset... [108]

Tennyson's poem was a tribute to Sir Richard Grenville's fatal action as captain of the *Revenge* in the Azores in 1591, when he took on approximately fifty Spanish ships with only one hundred men. Tennyson not only read Froude's account in preparation for writing the poem, but arranged to see the secretary of the Hakluyt society to learn more of Grenville.[109] These examples show how quickly the writing of national history could influence the cultural sphere.

Froude was hardly alone in his recasting of the Elizabethan era to fit the interests of the Victorian age. Rather, he was part of a wider trend in which authors including Shakespeare, Spenser and Ralegh attracted academic attention and inspired artistic works. But as Ormond emphasizes, the maritime strand of this rediscovery of the sixteenth century was as important as the literary. Froude was a key exemplar of the latter.[110] The seamless cloth he wove across the centuries was patterned by the innate brilliance of the nation's mariners and the country's requirement for supremacy at sea. Elizabethan seadogs became in Froude's writing not only embodiments of domestic national character – heroic, patriotic, undaunted by odds, Protestant – but also of international status and responsibility.

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[106] Leonee Ormond, 'The Spacious Times of Great Elizabeth: The Victorian Vision of the Elizabethan', *Victorian Poetry*, 25/3/4 (1987), pp. 37- 40.
[107] Ormond, 'The Spacious Times of Great Elizabeth', p. 37.
[108] Froude, 'England's Forgotten Worthies', p. 56.
[109] Ormond, 'The Spacious Times of Great Elizabeth', p. 39.
[110] Ibid., p. 32.

4.2 The Naval Historians

Froude's work used the maritime to exemplify a larger national narrative. At the same time that he was writing, however, the centrality of the sea to Britain's past was also being underlined in works of naval history, which was emerging as a separate academic discipline, staffed largely from the ranks of the navy. The main driving force behind this emergence was the perceived need to train naval officers for a modern war. The rising strength of foreign navies and the introduction of new technology in the later nineteenth century both raised the question of how they should be prepared for war and one route to that preparation was seen to be instruction in the course of past battles.

Andrew Lambert claims John Knox Laughton (1830-1915) as the founder of modern naval history and he was certainly the force behind the reformation of history teaching in the Royal Navy. [111] Although he left no major published work Lambert's research makes clear that Laughton had considerable impact on the small, but influential, coterie of naval historians of the late nineteenth century: especially the American Alfred Thayer Mahan, whose work was much read in Britain in the run up to the First World War[112] and the British writer Sir Julian Corbett.[113] Lambert demonstrates the close connections between the Royal Navy and the academic study of naval history, and how the same protagonists repeatedly appeared in the creation of organisations such as The Navy Records Society and the Society of Nautical Research. Laughton was a founder member of the Navy Records Society which was set up to publish original documents on the history of the Royal Navy. Their first publication in 1894

[111] Andrew Lambert, *The Foundations of Naval History: John Knox Laughton, the Royal Navy and the Historical Profession*, (London: Chatham, 1998).

[112] Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914), a friend of Laughton's, was also a naval officer and a lecturer in naval history and tactics under at the US Naval War College. Mahan's 1890 publication *The Influence of Sea Power upon History 1660- 1783* was the most influential text to come out from this group of historians - it was critically acclaimed and influenced the naval policies of Germany, Japan and the United States as well as Britain in the build up to the First World War. Mahan's ideas were founded on the importance of commerce, but he used this as the basis to argue for the necessity of a strong fighting navy.

[113] A writer and historian, Corbett came to the attention of Laughton after he published *Drake and the Tudor Navy* in 1898. Laughton invited him to edit an edition of Sir William Slyngsbie's *Relation of the Voyage to Cadiz 1596*, for the Navy Records Society. He joined the staff of the Royal Naval College before working for the Admiralty during the First World War and subsequently wrote the official history of the war at sea.

was, unsurprisingly at this moment, a two volume edition of State Papers relating to the defeat of the Spanish Armada. These historians were largely concerned with naval strategy and tactics. In another time period they would probably have attracted less attention, but their work coincided with an unprecedented focus on the navy, which filtered into popular culture.[114]

The new naval historians also placed particular importance on Drake and Nelson. Interest in Drake rose from the tercentenary of the Armada's defeat in 1888, which was celebrated in plays, pageantry, exhibitions and poetry, onwards.[115] In academic terms Corbett consolidated Drake's reputation with the publication of *Drake and the Tudor Navy* in 1898. Corbett argued that Drake was not only a hero but a master tactician and a precursor to Nelson in naval strategy. The cult of Nelson[116] was already to a certain extent entrenched in the national psyche, but it reached new heights towards the end of the nineteenth century: between 1885 and 1905, when for example, ten major new biographies of him were published.[117] Just as in the early nineteenth century these emphasised the character of Nelson as embodying ideal British characteristics. In addition The Navy League heavily promoted the centenary of Trafalgar, furthering the cult of Nelson with the intention of putting pressure on the government to maintain the naval dominance that had been won in 1805.[118]

The combined works of the general historians and the naval historians potently placed maritime culture at the heart of British culture. They drew deeply on past associations with the sea and historical ellipses created a seamless chronology between Drake, Nelson and the present. At the same time it galvanised the idea of the sea in the blood as this chronology naturalised both the idea of British sea power and consequent Empire as one of predestination. The Whig sense of history was also important in popularising maritime history and wider history amongst the middle classes as Feske has argued:

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[114] See Hamilton, *The Nation and Navy,* p. 361.
[115] John Sugden, *Sir Francis Drake* (London: Pimlico, 2006), p. 319.
[116] See for example Marianne Czisnik, *Horatio Nelson: A Controversial Hero* (London: Hodder, 2005); Cannadine (ed.), *Admiral Lord Nelson;* Behrman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea* and the final chapter of Andrew Lambert, *Nelson: Britannia's God of War* (London: Faber and Faber, 2004).
[117] Behrman, *Victorian Myths of the Sea,* p. 96.
[118] See discussion of Nelson in Chapter 2.

> The language of history served as the primary Victorian medium of public discourse, and that fact was a great boon to Liberal politics. Whig history functioned as an instrument of transmission. Its aim was civic instruction, mediating the translation of an eighteenth century aristocratic medium into the vernacular of an expanding mass electorate.[119]

5. The Role of Film in the Cult of the Navy

Just as the concerns of state, identity and heritage quickly spilled into the arts so film allied itself to the cult of the navy. This, in terms of numbers of films, was primarily through reportage and actuality film. These were however by no means objective portrayals of the maritime sphere: they were often deliberately patriotic, colluding with the aims of the Admiralty and state. In terms of the distribution of subjects on film they echoed subjects of popular debate with a bias towards the Royal Navy. The fictional films, while largely concentrating on the contemporary navy, absorbed the Victorian historians' notions of Britain's relationship with the sea. In addition they drew directly upon pre-existing artworks translating them for wide dissemination amongst, as previously mentioned, a predominately working class audience.

5.1 Actuality Films

Naval actuality films were by far the largest group of maritime productions, although approximately half of the total number of films covered other aspects of the maritime sphere: from trawler fishing, to passenger liners and shipbuilding. As might be expected the films of the Royal Navy covered all major events, such as fleet reviews or ships launched by members of the royal family but they also heavily featured the everyday workings of the navy. Other than official occasions, films concentrated on training establishments, cadets and the ordinary sailor at work and at play. This gave the public an insight of life within the Royal Navy as for the first time audiences could witness day-to-day operations from coaling battleships at sea to seeing how crews spent Christmas.[120] The opportunity to view life aboard a Royal Naval vessel

[119] Feske, *From Belloc to Churchill*, p. 4.
[120] See descriptions in Appendix 2.

was a novelty even for those acquainted with sea or who lived in maritime communities.

Alfred J. West, a pioneer of the naval film, was one of the first to demonstrate the public appetite for both film and maritime film in particular. The company devoted itself primarily to naval matters and in line with the broad trend their films were almost invariably of the contemporary navy. The only significant departures were documentary films on Nelson and HMS *Victory* which were produced for the Trafalgar centenary celebrations in 1905 under the title *Our Navy of the Past*.[121] A series of West's films under the title *Our Navy* ran as a remarkably long permanent programme at the Polytechnic, Regent Street from 1899 until 1913 with fresh films being added each year.[122] West contended in his autobiography that the success of *Our Navy* was the first programme to demonstrate the possibilities of cinema entertainment when demands for prints were received from all over Britain, Europe and the Empire.[123] West's work was not only significant in terms of showing the commercial potential of cinema but also because he worked in close co-operation with the Admiralty and the Navy League: thereby demonstrating a network of agencies with an interest in furthering the naval cause through film.[124] He also cultivated links with the Royal Family and *Our Navy* was, for example, seen in separate command performances by both Queen Victoria and Edward VII and shown to George V when he was Captain of HMS *Crescent*. West saw his work as important to the nation: 'I felt that in stimulating patriotic interest with my pictures, I was making myself useful to my country...'[125]

The links between the main agencies of the cult, the state, Admiralty as well as the Navy League and film are particularly well demonstrated by West's company. These films were not simply a matter of novelty: their value was also recognised by those in power as a way of disseminating naval propaganda. Both the Admiralty and the Navy League would later be directly involved in film as producers but always to a limited

[121] See Bernard Taithe, 'The Franco-British Trafalgar Centenary in 1905', in Hoock (ed.), *History, Commemoration, and National Preoccupation*, p. 59.
[122] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, p. 65.
[123] Ibid., p. 75.
[124] Alfred J. West, *Sea Salts and Celluloid* (Portsmouth: 1936), unpublished manuscript, transcription available at www.ournavy.org [accessed 28 December 2010], p. 17.
[125] West, *Sea Salts and Celluloid*, p. 5.

extent. The Admiralty in particular were keen to encourage filmmakers to official occasions and went to some trouble in providing facilities for them.[126] This co-operation largely applied to coverage of official occasions such as naval reviews. Commercial companies, however, would remain the primary instigator of maritime films with propagandistic intent or otherwise which implies that they were popular with audiences bearing in mind the commercial imperative.

Between 1897 and 1919, commercial companies made at least 50 films of ship launches.[127] These films were popular with distributors, especially those which featured warships,[128] although exactly half of those identified were non-naval vessels ranging from liners to lifeboats. The political value of these films was that they promoted the idea of Britain at the cutting edge of naval technology, both at home and abroad, and offered reassurance at home that Britain was keeping pace with the arms race.[129] Other technological advances were also routinely filmed. For example in 1907 at the Imperial Conference, an event staged for the benefit of foreign dignitaries, filmmaker Charles Urban captured the staging of a torpedo attack on HMS *Dreadnought* and produced the first footage of a torpedo cutting through water.[130]Likewise the point of showing numerous cadets training, for example, was that it demonstrated Britain's preparedness for potential war. The recruits were shown to be au fait with the latest technology and their numbers emphasised the nation's commitment to a strong navy. Their value was endorsed by frequent royal visits and prize-givings which were also inevitably captured on camera. The masculinity and virility of the British sailor, and hence suitability to defend the country, was underlined by numerous films of sailors at drill and sports. This was particularly important in terms of the argument suggested by Delap: that the mid-Victorian sailor had been 'a relatively unproblematic site for a cultural projection of 'rugged' masculinity and its social confinement via chivalric officers' but this certainty was challenged by a perceived de-skilling of sailors in the change over from sail to steam. She suggests that there was a 'crisis in maritime masculinity' as the work of those such as stokers and engineers, more akin to jobs ashore, led to public concern about a

[126] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game,* p. 78.
[127] See Appendix 3.
[128] Charles Urban quoted in Rüger, *The Great Naval Game,* p. 66.
[129] The role of technology and the role of ship launches in promoting national identity is considered in greater depth in Ch3.
[130] *Torpedo Attack on HMS Dreadnought* (1907, 460ft).

loss of traditional seafaring skills. Natural seafaring skill and toughness was of course a fundamental notion underpinning the success of the nation. This may offer some explanation for the numerous films that focussed upon traditional gun drills and robust sports such as boxing matches between sailors.

5.2 Royal Occasions

Coverage of the royal family was ubiquitous but was particularly important in terms of naval film. As Rüger has explored in his *The Great Naval Game*, perhaps *the* key, and certainly the most distinct, site in which the linkage between navy and nation was performed for public consumption in this period came in the form of naval pageantry, and in the use of the navy to celebrate royal occasions. Rüger powerfully demonstrates how the Royal Navy as an icon was used to represent Britishness through a combination of 'royal, national and imperial symbolism' in an excellent example of 'invented tradition.'[131] The fleet review which marked Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1897 instigated the collocation of naval pageant and the shared national celebration of royalty. At least four film companies produced films of the review. This was repeated for the coronation in 1902 where at least six film companies captured the fleet alongside the Royal Family.[132] Although this was the first coronation to be marked in such a way, it was described by the Admiralty and the press as a 'royal tradition'.[133] That such a description went unquestioned was in part because of the close association between royalty and navy established by Victorian historians. It is an indication of the socially constructed, rather than automatic, nature of that association that whereas the story of Elizabeth I was inextricably linked to her sailors, Nelson's story was not inevitably that of George III. A trick film made in 1912 *From Behind the Flag* explicitly visualised the relationship between royalty and the navy: it showed a girl's Union Jack turn into a sailor, then into Britannia and then to the King.

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[131] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, p. 3.
[132] *Coronation Naval Demonstration* (R.W. Paul, 1902); *Great Coronation Review at Spithead* (Gaumont, 1902); *Magnificent Panorama of the Fleet* (James Williamson, 1902) a series of 3 films of the review; *Naval Review* (William Dickson, 1902); *Spithead Naval Review* (Warwick) a series of 5 films; *The Naval Review: Progress of the Royal Yacht* (Cecil Hepworth, 1902).
[133] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, p. 19.

Moreover these films were reaching the masses. Hamilton's research suggests that the Navy League, for example, was far more successful in reaching the middle-classes than the working classes. He attributes the success of naval propaganda amongst the working classes to a rise in popular affordable newspapers that tended to be 'intensely patriotic' and does not consider film in the equation.[134] Rüger however indicates the extent to which film could more than treble an audience for official occasions. It was estimated that 4 million saw the fleet assembled in the Thames in 1909 but by 1911 Pathé claimed an audience of more than twenty million within Britain and the Empire for a fleet review.[135] The naval films, also with a tendency towards patriotism, played to an overwhelmingly working class audience and in addition were accessible to children and the illiterate. Early film was incorporated into popular entertainments such as fairgrounds and the music hall and therefore had the potential to attract a casual audience quite different to those who may have chosen to read the newspapers.

5.3 Fictional Maritime Films

The role of the significant number of fictional maritime films produced during this time period has not been considered in terms of the cult of the navy, with the exception of fictional films on Nelson which are analysed in the next chapter. There is also no evidence to suggest that fictional films were afforded Admiralty co-operation until after the First World War. Nevertheless many of these scenarios responded directly to aspects of the cult of the navy: for example in respect of invasion fears, in repetition of the views of the Victorian historians, in re-enacting other cultural manifestations such as plays, songs and poetry and in helping to define ideal national characteristics embodied in the figure of the sailor. The roots of the fictional maritime film were not however all derived from the ruling culture. The 'Jack Tar' figure for example was already an established music hall figure, and there were a number of films made to accompany popular songs and tunes from the halls which also drew upon traditional naval balladry.[136]

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[134] Hamilton, *The Nation and the Navy*, p.364.
[135] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, pp. 50 and 66.
[136] The Jack Tar figure is discussed at length in Ch5. Examples of films based on traditional music include: *Death of Nelson* (1897); *Sailor's Hornpipe* (1898, 70ft) and *Four Jolly Boys from 'The Princess of Kensington'* (1907).

Representations of the Royal Navy again formed the largest single group in maritime fictional early shorts. Those made prior to the First World War which used the sea as their context were often romantic in nature, using a sentimental image of the sailor. The 'sailor' was just as likely to be a naval rating, a fisherman or from the Merchant Navy. This was significant because naval pageantry had the effect of prioritising the role of the Royal Navy rather than the Merchant Navy: ships from the latter were not included in a naval review until the celebration of George V's silver jubilee in 1935.[137] The vast majority of all types of maritime film had contemporary settings. Nevertheless there was a significant body of films that featured the Royal Navy in a historic context and films of all types invariably referenced Britain's maritime past.

5.4 Contemporary Issues

5.4.1 Spy and Invasion Films

Hamilton suggests that there was a deliberate strategy on the part of the popular pro-navy press to spread fears of invasion. Naval publicists 'were equipped to write material which could breed insecurity in the public mind' he contends and this in turn engendered popular support for heavy naval funding.[138] He fails to acknowledge, however, that whatever was topical in the newspapers was frequently topical on film. The most obvious manifestation of this was the spread of invasion fears and infiltration by foreign spies which were also heavily represented in film and literature. The spy novel came to prominence in the years directly preceding the First World War. Concerns over national security, impending war and the arms race created an atmosphere of near paranoia over the possibility of German spies in Britain bound up

[137] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, p. 267.
[138] Hamilton, *The Nation and the Navy*, p. 364.

with fears over anarchists and invasion.[139] Up until the end of the First World War fictional films based on the contemporary navy often had a plot that centred on espionage and the capture of spies.[140] Notably, two of the earliest British serials *Lieutenant Rose* (1910-1915) and *Lieutenant Daring* (1911-1914) relied heavily upon spy plots. The Daring series was described in the *Kinematograph Weekly* as one of the most successful British series, which had 'won fame by reason of the patriotic fervour they exhale...'[141] These films represented contemporary issues in such a way as to reinforce patriotism and again to offer reassurance that the navy was indeed capable of saving the day.

5.4.2 Fictional Film and the Character of the Seaman

The Daring and Rose, as many other naval cinematic productions, made heroes of naval officers, imbuing them with masculine and national ideals. As the *Bioscope* commented on *Lieutenant Daring and the Plans of the Mine Fields* (1912):

> We have already learnt from previous acquaintance with the gallant young officer that he has no equal as a man possessed of a ready wit and a bulldog determination to carry out to the finish any proceeding upon which he sets his mind. It is because of this tenacity of purpose that he is so beloved by the picture playgoing public; for Englishmen and women delight in being shown the qualities which have won for England's seadogs a name at once so greatly feared and respected.[142]

This description of Daring's character very much relates to Mandell Creighton's 1896 analysis of English national character, which he saw as coming in to being in the

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[139] Although beyond the scope of this thesis it should be noted that the potential of aerial attack also played a major part in creating fears around invasion and infiltration by spies. This is discussed for example in: David Edgerton, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation* (London: Macmillan, 2001); Hew Strachan, 'War and Society in the 1920s and 1930s', in Roger Chickering and Stig Forster (eds), *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia and the United States, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 35-54; Uri Bialer, *The Shadow of the Bomber: The Fear of Air Attack and British Politics, 1932-1939* (London: RHS, 1981). There was also cinematic response to these fears both before the First World War and between the wars, for example: *The Aerial Anarchists* (1912, 700ft) about a super aircraft that bombs St Pauls; *Aerial Invasion Frustrated* (1915, 1000ft) set in the First World War; *The Gap* (1937) a speculation on what would happen if London was bombed by air and *Midnight Menace* (1937) about a Ruritanian minister's plot to use wireless-controlled airplanes to bomb London.

[140] Examples include *So Like a Woman* (1911); *The Foreign Spy* (1911); *The Great Anarchist Mystery* (1912); *Secret Service* (1913); *Britain's Naval Secret* (1915).

[141] 'Lieutenant Daring and the Mystery of Room 41', *Kinematograph Monthly Film Record,* 13 October 1913, p. 77. The series was so successful that from 1912 it was turned into a regular short story feature in *Pearson's Magazine*.

[142] 'The Pick of the Programmes', *Bioscope*, 3 October, 1912.

Tudor period. He saw the English as having: 'an adventurous spirit, practical sagacity, a resolve to succeed, a willingness to seek his fortune in any way, courage to face dangers, cheerfulness under disaster, perseverance in the sphere which he has chosen.'[143] To illustrate these characteristics Creighton had in fact chosen the case of one Robert Tomson who sailed from Andover to Cadiz to make his fortune, later survives shipwreck, the Spanish Inquisition and 'chivalrously' marries an 'unprotected' lady whose father died on another sea voyage.[144] His views and choice of example are clearly related to Froude's configuration of nation founded in the moment of Elizabeth and Protestantism.

Mandler notes with surprise that at the turn of the nineteenth century and before the First World War 'when Britain (along with the rest of Europe) was gripped by anxiety about international competitiveness and the need to pursue a maximally 'efficient' economic and military policy, the language of national character was *not* [sic] often employed to express or allay that anxiety.' He suggests instead that there was 'a whipping up of *patriotism*, of deference to traditional national symbols (flag, Constitution, military leadership), rather than sentiments of organic English nationality.'[145] While it was undoubtedly true that the navy was promoted in this way it could also be argued that the character of the sailor within such representations was inseparable from the 'language of national character' as the quote on Daring seems to indicate. Moreover the Daring films were dealing directly with those anxieties of the period. Mandler's assertion may be true in broader cultural context but the sailor was most certainly a locus of a continual discussion of national character. It was one that had become 'naturalised' through the idea of a national disposition for success at sea: the sea in the blood. The example of the seaman through which to discuss matters of national characteristics and ideals was a well established dialogue. This important notion needs to be considered to understand the representation of sailors on film in this period and beyond.

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[143] Mandell Creighton, *The English National Character* (London: Henry Frowde, 1896), pp. 30. Creighton (1843-1901) was a British historian and the Bishop of London.
[144] Ibid, pp. 29-30.
[145] Peter Mandler, 'The Consciousness of Modernity? Liberalism and the English National Character, 1870-1940,' in Daunton and Rieger (eds), *Meanings of Modernity*, p.130.

6. British Character and the Seaman

The tendency in actuality films was to make heroes of all seamen and this was implicit in the notion of British sea supremacy. However it was really only in fictional films that the specifics of character could be explored. The character of naval officers and ordinary seamen in fiction (on film as well as in plays, literature and poetry) was a continual negotiation of contemporary ideas about gentlemanly behaviour, masculinity, heroism, class and gender. Mostly this had more to do with society onshore rather than at sea. As Delap suggests, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, 'The ideology of 'manly' behaviour at sea was extremely important in shaping the broad social consensus concerning the nature of (chivalrous) masculinity.'[146] The idea of the seaman as a locus of the ideals of British character grew simultaneously with Britain's characterisation of herself as a maritime nation. This was significant in placing the navy in a central position in the discussion of national ideals, the notion of gentlemanly behaviour, masculinity and class. These themes also recurred in twentieth century films.

Debates over the ideal nature of the sea captain rose from the success, and consequent wealth, of sailors such as Drake and Hawkins. This success attracted more members of the gentry than before to a career at the sea during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The navy consequently developed with two kinds of officers: those from the aristocracy appointed by the Crown (known as 'gentlemen commanders' or 'land captains') and those who had worked their way through the ranks (known as 'seaman captains' and later as 'tarpaulins').[147] Tension arose between them largely because the gentlemen officers did not have the in depth training in seamanship that the seaman captains had learnt from a young age, and therefore were not necessarily competent to lead at sea. The prowess of Drake and Hawkins as seamen had made them heroes and elevated their social status. Seamanship remained a requirement, the absence of which could not be compensated for by social standing alone.

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[146] Lucy Delap, 'Thus Does Man Prove his Fitness to be the Master of Things': Shipwrecks , Chivalry, Masculinity in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Britain', *Cultural and Social History* 3/1 (2006), p. 48.

[147] See J. D. Davies, *Gentlemen and Tarpaulins: The Officers and Men of the Restoration Navy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), p. 5, p. 27, and Norbert Elias, *The Genesis of the Naval Profession*, (Dublin: Dublin University Press, 2007), p. 36.

Many of the gentlemen captains were dispensed with during Cromwell's government but returned when Charles II was restored to the throne. Criticisms of them continued, but recent analyses have suggested that these indicated not, as it might appear, a significant problem of command within the navy, but rather reflected persistent 'political and social tensions ashore'.[148] This was an early and public example of the navy being used to discuss the issue of class: often treated as a novel development when it appears as a prominent feature of maritime films in the Second World War. In fact, as will be seen, this tradition was a long-established one to which cinematic representations of the navy had already contributed by 1939.

The view that gentlemen were not suitable for leadership at sea was perpetuated by writers including Samuel Pepys[149] and Thomas Macaulay who famously commented that 'There were gentlemen and there were seamen in the navy of Charles the Second. But the seamen were not gentlemen; and the gentlemen were not seamen'.[150] From the mid-eighteenth century on, with the navy increasingly successful in battle, and victorious captains such as Vernon,[151] and above all Nelson, glorified, the notion that good sailors lacked gentlemanly qualities was contested, for example in the writings of Coleridge, Austen and Marryat.[152] Fulford attributes this to antipathy towards the ruling classes after a string of royal scandals. These undermined both the literal and the moral authority of the aristocratic classes:

> After the Clarke scandal and the Queen Caroline affair of 1820 antipathy to aristocratic immorality helped precipitate a middle-class backlash, and the ensuing redefinition of the social and political order and to the growing professional classes. A significant factor in this redefinition was the literary idealization of naval heroes who were resistant to the sexual and political corruption displayed by the princes, the Commander in Chief and the aristocracy. The trend began with the cult of Nelson and continued with poems praising the victor at Waterloo: among the Romantics, Campbell,

[148] Rene Moelker and Stephen Mennell, 'Introduction,' in Elias, *The Genesis of the Naval Profession*, p. 21. See also Davies, *Gentlemen and Tarpaulins,* p. 232.
[149] See Davies, *Gentleman and Tarpaulins,* p. 232.
[150] Ibid., p. 6.
[151] Admiral Edward Vernon was feted for his 1739 victory at Porto Bello against the Spanish and gained public popularity to the extent that commemorative pottery and medals were mass produced in his honour. See Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy,* pp. 2-3.
[152] Tim Fulford, 'Romanticizing the Empire: The Naval Heroes of Southey, Coleridge, Austen and Marryat', *Modern Language Quarterly,* 60/2 (1999), pp. 161- 196.

> Bowles and Scott... wrote poems celebrating Nelson and Wellington as saviours of Britain and Britishness.[153]

Changing perceptions of class as related to naval officers were apparent at Nelson's funeral. The government chose to appoint Admiral Sir Peter Parker – an early patron of Nelson – as the chief mourner. This was a role traditionally taken in aristocratic funerals by the successor to the title of the deceased. Social inheritance was therefore replaced by naval patronage.[154] Nelson had, by dint of service, not only acquired the status of a gentleman, but was also seen to embody the ideal national characteristics that in England had frequently been attributed to the gentry.[155]

These characteristics could be seen in Robert Southey's 1813 biography of Nelson. This was a highly romantic account that focussed on Nelson's character rather than his military exploits: it was also subsequently to prove amongst the most influential biographies of the admiral.[156] Southey's idealised Nelson was portrayed as highly skilled, patriotic, self-reliant, courageous, modest, resilient and devoted to duty. As Conley points out, this new imagining of the officer afloat was part of a broader assertion of a cohesive national, now British identity: '…masculinity that was endowed with self-restraint, respectability and bravery'. The result was that: 'While the men of the Royal Navy extended and defended the empire, representations of naval men increasingly reflected and informed masculine ideals in Victorian and Edwardian Britain'.[157] This image did not immediately extend to the able seaman or to the mercantile marine. There, depictions of naval manhood retained some of their late eighteenth century associations of excess in regard to women, drink and violence.[158] Even when the ordinary sailor in the Royal Navy acquired greater respectability during the nineteenth century these older images of the sailor persisted in the mythical figure of Jack Tar: a personification of the spirit of the common sailor or able seaman whose cinematic presence is discussed further in Chapter 5.

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[153] Ibid., pp. 170-171.
[154] See Czisnik, *Horatio Nelson*, p. 7, and Timothy Jenks, 'Contesting the Hero: The Funeral of Admiral Lord Nelson', *Journal of British Studies*, 39/4 (2000), pp. 427-8.
[155] See Fulford, 'Romanticizing the Empire', pp. 161-196.
[156] Fulford, 'Romanticizing the Empire', p. 173.
[157] Mary A. Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack: Representing Naval Manhood in the British Empire, 1870-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 3.
[158] Ibid., p. 3.

The emphasis on British character, especially, in relation to Empire is something that Richards identifies as central to the projection of Britain on screen in the first part of the century.[159] This drew upon the ideas promoted during the nineteenth century:

> The whole mass of formal and informal propaganda popularized the idea of British character to the public. Citizenship classes in the Board schools were geared to generating the character and attributes needed to sustain British pre-eminence – duty discipline and good conduct. Juvenile literature complemented and supplemented formal teaching, setting similar moral instruction in a palatable fictional format.[160]

The characters of this literature were frequently drawn on screen. Many cultural manifestations of navalism could be seen as largely appealing to a middle class audience such as the aforementioned books of Kingsley and the poetry of Tennyson and West End theatre. These high-brow entertainments, however, were a common basis for film productions which attracted a working class following. As Rieger notes 'Innovative media, it was claimed, upset existing cultural hierarchies by making 'high culture' more widely available.'[161] Marryat's *Midshipman Easy* was adapted for screen in 1915 and Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* in 1919. Tennyson's sea poem *Enoch Arden* was the basis of *After Many Years* (1908, US) and *Enoch Arden* (1915). The West End play *The Flag Lieutenant* was made into a film in 1919. These films tended to deliberately bring the values of the middle classes to working class audiences with the intention of educating the masses. This is discussed further in relation to the representation of maritime history on screen in the case study of *Drake of England* in the next chapter.

Following the broad trend the films based on literary culture tended to focus upon naval officers rather than ratings. Alongside these however were numerous short films that presented the ordinary sailor as hero, but on a small scale: he saved women from unsavoury characters, caught thieves and adopted orphans.[162] Lucy Delap has demonstrated the Victorian and Edwardian fascination with shipwreck [163]and this was

[159] Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, pp. 31-59.
[160] Ibid., p. 32.
[161] Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity in Britain and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 86.
[162] For example: *Arrest of a Pickpocket* (1895); *Jack's Return* (1905); *The Old Homestead*, (1905); *A Sailor's Lass*, (1907); *Shipmates* (1909); *A Son of the Sea*, (1915); *The Lights of Home*, (1920).
[163] Delap, 'Thus does man prove his fitness to be the master of things', pp. 45-74.

a particularly common scenario on film for the sailor hero.[164]She suggests that shipwreck narratives were used particularly in debates surrounding matters of class and gender. Firstly the idea of 'women and children first' in the priority of rescue was seen to be part of a Victorian revival of the chivalric code, and more particularly of the 'eternal law of the sea'. Although as Delap has shown this code was by no means strictly adhered to or uncontested, and it was a narrative that divided men of different classes and race as well as defining women as creatures in need of protection: it was a discourse that reinforced the hierarchy of the ruling classes. Victorian and Edwardian gentleman were expected to adhere to such a tradition but it was one which 'working-class or foreign seafarers or passengers (mostly steerage emigrants or soldiers) *could not be trusted* to observe.'[165] Likewise there was a hierarchy of the women and children who were to be saved: essentially 'ladies' first, followed by white women and children.'[166] Delap contends that the nineteenth century ideas of women as weak or prone to hysteria and consequent unsuitability for shipboard life had helped to maintain the maritime world as a male preserve; and that 'gendered codes at sea continued to serve as fables that warned of the social and political outcomes of deviating from the status quo.'[167] Although these views of women were increasingly contested in the light of feminism and the battle for female suffrage the question of their place in the maritime world of men would be a subject on film as late as the 1950s. On film, however, as early as 1908 there was evidence of role reversal, whereby it was women who were the life savers, for example *A Modern Grace Darling* (1908); *The Lass who Loved a Sailor* (1909) and *Heart of a Fishergirl* (1910). This would seem to concur with Delap's findings that there was not one single coherent discourse surrounding shipwreck narratives, although undoubtedly the normative narrative in the colonial and imperialist construct was one of the white male.

[164] For example: *The Wreck of the Mary Jane* (1907); *Saved from the Sea* (1907); *Dying of Thirst* (1907); *Parted to Meet Again* (1910); *Through Fire to Fortune* (1911); *A Fishergirl's Love* (1913)
[165] Delap, 'Thus does man prove his fitness to be the master of things', p. 53.
[166] Ibid., p. 52.
[167] Ibid., p. 60.

7. Naval Representation and Social Construct

As has been seen the figure of the seaman was used in various ways to represent wider issues of social order. What has been discussed so far however shows aspects of national identity that were directly informed by perceptions of the maritime world. The portrayal of that world on film was, of course, influenced by other more general national tropes. The most important of these was idea of family as the cornerstone of civilised Victorian and Edwardian society. As Pisters and Staat have noted the nineteenth century was particularly significant as the workplace increasingly became separate from the home and 'thus the "private" family was born'. In turn the 'private' family became a subject for philosophers and economists as well as a common theme in popular culture.[168] Gledhill's edited volume, *Home is Where the Heart Is* demonstrates the continuity of the focus on the bourgeois nuclear family from the nineteenth century music hall to the films.[169]

Historians such as Anne McClintock and Deborah Chambers have demonstrated the importance of the Victorian vision of the family construct in Britain's self image and use in dissemination of British ideals in the context of colonialism.[170] As Chambers suggests:

> Discrete family units, headed by a male breadwinner, became the hallmark of both civilised society and stability. Deviation from this family model (signified by overcrowding, illegitimacy and lone parenthood) was regarded as savagery. This model of the family assured a normative role in mid-nineteenth-century British society, and by extension, within its colonies.[171]

This normative configuration of the family was essentially white, patriarchal and heterosexual. Victorian thinking in terms of Darwinian Theory and eugenics justified these views as natural and hereditary. As Chambers argues that this ensured 'an inherent class bias, racism and sexism of familism' which emphasised the

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[168] Patricia Pisters and Wim Staat (eds), *Shooting the Family: Transnational Media and Intercultural Values* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2005), p. 9.
[169] Christine Gledhill (ed.), *Home is Where the Heart Is: Studies in Melodrama and the Woman's Film* (London: BFI, 1987).
[170] Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context* (London: Routledge, 2005); Deborah Chambers, *Representing the Family* (London: Sage, 2001), p. 37. See also Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1750-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1988).
[171] Chambers, *Representing the Family*, p. 37.

appropriateness of British rule in the 'context of national and racial fitness and purity'.[172]

McClintock argues that 'nations are frequently figured through the iconography of familial and domestic space' and 'symbolically figured as domestic genealogies.'[173] The most obvious example of this was the centrality of the Royal Family but the rhetoric of 'family' was common currency in phrases such as 'the family of nations' in describing Empire. This iconography was clearly apparent in the representation of the maritime sphere. First as has been seen the Royal Navy was heavily allied with the Royal Family through, for example, naval reviews and ship launches which were of particular attraction to filmmakers. The alliance was underlined by the Victorian historians and their emphasis upon Elizabeth I's close association with her sailors. Second, the representation of sailors on film often highlighted familial tie through generations of the same family having served under both Drake and Nelson. Implicit in long family tradition was the notion of not only 'salt in the blood' but also of a race bred for the sea. Third the language used to describe Britain's relationship between nation, sailors and the sea often evoked domestic relationships: that is the idea of the notion of the nation as one big family associated with and suited to the sea. This can be seen for example in just looking at film titles: *When Our Sailor Son Comes Home* (1908), *Sons of the Sea* (1914, 1915, 1925, 1939), *Sons of Our Empire* (1917).

8. First World War Official Film

By the time that the First World War began the nation had been subject to sustained naval propaganda for twenty years. The war years actually saw a drop in the overall number maritime films made which may have been attributable to the availability of resources or to the fact that the dominant mode of warfare was on land. In the build up to war there was an initial reluctance for official involvement in film depicting warfare from all government offices. When Pathé applied for press accreditation to film action in the Balkans in 1912, a Foreign Office confidential report said, 'This is not quite the same thing as the correspondent of a known and responsible newspaper.

[172] Chambers, *Representing the Family*, p. 41
[173] McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, p. 357.

Pathé furnishes the films for most of the "picture palaces" or cinematograph shows (and doesn't in this particular case deserve much encouragement).'[174] This it appears was largely a result of snobbery towards the fledgling art form as it appealed largely to the working classes who were seen to be vulnerable to the power of film.[175] As Rieger has analysed there was considerable fear of the power of film as a new technology, first in its potential for illusion (and thus misinformation) and secondly because of the demographic to which it appealed. Contemporaries suggested that 'the lure of the cinema...was so strong that women neglected their duties as mothers and wives, thereby threatening the foundations of orderly family life.'[176] The very fact that cinema was considered to hold so much power also made it impossible for the authorities to ignore as a propaganda tool – indeed West's contacts back in the 1890s had already proved this.

The Admiralty was a sponsor of the 1915 film *Britain Prepared* alongside Wellington House, the Ministry of Munitions and the War Office. This was the first major official film made in the war and ran for 2 hours and 45 minutes which was an exceptional length at this time. It featured all the services, munitions and shipbuilding. Four sections of the film were made in colour and each of these focussed on the Royal Navy, thereby giving it especial prominence. As the memoirs of the naval censor, Rear Admiral Sir Douglas Brownrigg show the Admiralty was split over whether such publicity was desirable:

> Mr Balfour succeeded in overcoming the rooted objection of the Grand Fleet to my form of publicity; Lord Jellicoe once he had accepted the proposal threw himself into it heart and soul; while Henry Jackson, after he signed the order to the Grand Fleet, said 'Take it away. I don't agree with it, though I have signed it.'[177]

The Admiralty did not initiate any propaganda films themselves until 1917 when the Intelligence Division decided to appoint an official cameraman.[178] As will be seen in the course of this thesis Admiralty co-operation with filmmakers was often formed on

[174] Quoted in: Stephen Buttomore, 'The Biograph in Battle', in Dibbets and Hogenkamp (eds), *Film and the First World War*, p. 31.
[175] Attitudes towards film as an art form are discussed further in Ch2.
[176] Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity*, p. 93.
[177] Douglas Brownrigg, *Indiscretions of a Naval Censor* (London: Cassell, 1920), pp. 37-38.
[178] See Nicholas Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda During the First World War* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 175.

an ad-hoc basis through personal association and almost never without objection from somewhere within the ranks. The position of cinematographer was filled by F. W. Engholm, a cameraman for Topical Budget newsreels who had already filmed the Balkan War accredited by the Turkish and Serbian armies and who worked subsequently with accreditation from the Belgian army during the German invasion in 1914. Crucially however, Engholm had joined the navy as a boy in 1896 before embarking on a film career in 1911. In 1915 he re-enlisted and in 1917 became a commissioned sub-lieutenant and made official film for the Admiralty for the rest of the war.[179]

The Admiralty was responsible for approximately 12 official films, mostly made by Engholm.[180] They were slow to embrace all kinds of publicity: when Lord Beaverbrook approached them for photographs to fill two rooms for an exhibition of military photographs for the Red Cross in 1918 the Navy could simply not supply them and hastily employed a photographer for a subsequent naval exhibition also instigated by Beaverbrook.[181] The lack of Admiralty impetus towards producing their own films, and their late involvement was repeated in Second World War. This may not, however, indicate a reluctance to be involved in film although there were definitely factions within the navy that remained vehemently against publicity. They consistently supported maritime-themed films in providing personnel and equipment throughout the whole period covered by this thesis and as previously noted co-operated with Alfred J. West in the very early years of cinema. This would include fictional film only after the First World War. One could also argue that they had no need to go to the expense of making films for general release themselves. There seemed to be no end of enthusiastic filmmakers eager to tackle the naval film with an almost invariable level of reverence and conservatism that could only delight the Admiralty at the onset of both world wars. Moreover Reeves contends that the naval official films with 'pompous titles and dull images' could not compete with what he

[179] British Universities Film and Video Council Website , *F. W. Engholm* available at http://bufvc.ac.uk/newsonscreen/search/staff/detail.php?id=32833&issue_id=685&story_id=125131&referral=BUND accessed 10/6/2011

[180] See non-fiction film appendix. Reeves implies that Engholm made all of the official films, and his work numbered 8 productions, but there are additional films attributed to the Admiralty found in IWM film catalogue and others. It is possible that some of these were endorsed by the Admiralty rather than produced by them. Nevertheless the output remained relatively low in comparison with commercial ventures.

[181] Douglas Brownrigg, *Indiscretions of a Naval Censor* (London: Cassell, 1920), p. 83.

considers to be the superior achievements of the army films made in 1916-7 and so the Admiralty may have seen that commercial cinema with their co-operation served them best.[182]

A distinct rhetoric had already been established to represent the navy and this was evident in the official films of the First World War. Engholm tended to make extensive use of rhetoric, employing a high number of intertitles within his films.[183]In particular they drew upon first the skeletal chronology of maritime history established by the Victorian historians, second the state cultivation of association with the Royal Family, third, the character and spirit of the seaman as drawn in literature and film and fourth the imperialist construct of family. For example the Admiralty's first official film, *The Story of the Drifters and of the Sea Dogs who Made Them* (1917) opened with the following inter-title:

> These men are of the type that made Drake's Navy, and of the Heroes who died with Nelson. Sturdy fishermen with the spirit of adventure in their blood, and the love of the sea in their hearts.
>
> Engaged in the deadly peril of netting submarines and minelaying, they risk their lives to guard our merchant ships and protect our shores. Silent, uncomplaining, zealous; Heroes every one.

In this short text some of the key ideas that had been generated from the seventeenth century onwards were brought together. The title drew the familiar line between Drake and Nelson, implicated the notion of a 'natural' national blood-tie to the sea and indicated ideals of masculine behaviour. *The Way of a Ship on the Sea* (1918) which looked at the symbiotic relationship between the allied navies and the merchant marine opened with the following inter-title emphasising the family metaphor: 'The sea is their foster mother. Between these services there is a family affection and a mutual appreciation denied to those that know not THE SEA.' Whether indeed this rhetoric was 'pompous and dull' it, and the ideas behind it, continued to underpin representations of the maritime sphere well into the twentieth century with almost no resistance or counter-imagery.

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[182] Reeves, *Official British Film Propaganda During the First World War*, p. 179.
[183] See Ibid., p. 175.

9. Conclusions

An understanding of the elements of the relationship between Britain and the sea that came together in the Victorian period is crucial in understanding how and why the maritime sphere was represented on screen. The attitudes and projections of sea power and nation outlined in this chapter underpin virtually all the maritime films of the twentieth century. One of the most enduring consequences of this was the tendency of the 'national story' to unify the individual nations of the British Isles in a single narrative history. The idea of the nation-state, albeit dominated by English history, precluded what is now termed the four nation approach to history. This in particular, especially because many maritime films were made in response to warfare during the first half of the twentieth century already demonstrated maritime cinema that was concerned with the projection of 'nation' rather than its individual constituent parts. In conjunction with the cornerstone of the normative white family unit and an emphasis on dynasty this encouraged a monoethnic representation of nation. As Kearney has noted 'A monoethnic history carries with it the danger of imposing a reassuring Whig interpretation of the past.'[184] These combined factors, and the inherent problems of such a representation would be one persisted on maritime film throughout the twentieth century.

This chapter has indicated that the view of maritime history in the Victorian and early Edwardian period was the culmination of state, social and literary interventions. The ideas of nation enshrined within its navy and seamen were drawn continually from deeper roots using tropes that had developed and layered over time. During this period the intersection of academic and popular history consolidated and repackaged long-held ideas of Britain and the sea. The result of the remobilisation of sixteenth century texts in the creation of a national narrative in combination with the work of the naval historians and popular representation in art and literature created a particular chronology of maritime history. This was a chronology based on naval battle which drew a straight line between its two most iconic figures and moments: Drake and the defeat of the Armada, and Nelson and Trafalgar. This was reflective of a wider

[184] Hugh Kearney, *Ireland: Contested Ideas of Nationalism and History* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), p. 161.

pattern that MacKenzie identifies in the late nineteenth century that, heroes such as Nelson:

> mainly inhabited three heroic ages: first the Elizabethan period; second, the sequences of wars against the French in the eighteenth century, culminating in the Napoleonic; and third the imperial age.[185]

As such this chronology reflects a pattern identified by commentators on national identity whereby social representations of history interweave important events and people into what are referred to as 'narratives of origin.' There tends to be a consensus across groups as to the constitution of these key moments in history and 'the temporal sequence of nominated events tends to follow a U shape, with recent and foundational events nominated by lay people more frequently than intermediate events in time.'[186]

The Victorian representation of history view appeared to 'naturalise' a link between navy, monarchy and nation. Again a link between navy and identity could not be assumed. It was a complicated cultural construct, in which film played a major role in forwarding and reinforcing that construction. The Victorian construction created a set of shared assumptions about sea power and Britain that extended to include the seamen themselves as embodiments of national character. These shared assumptions were the basis upon which the films of the twentieth century chiefly drew.

Film played a central role in the dissemination of these ideas in responding, creating and representing all aspects of the cult of the navy. First it vastly expanded the potential audience naval events. Second it translated literary and dramatic aspects of high-brow culture for a more general audience. Significantly it reached a predominately working class audience which arguably had the least access to the major agencies of the cult of the navy with the exception of the newly expanded popular press. While it is not possible to claim that it created a consensus with

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[185] John M. MacKenzie, 'Nelson Goes Global: The Nelson Myth in Britain and Beyond', in Cannadine (ed.), *Admiral Lord Nelson: Context and Legacy*, p. 145.

[186] James H. Liu and Denis J. Hilton, 'How the past weighs on the present: Social representations of history and their role in identity politics', *British Journal of Social Psychology* 44 (2005), pp. 539. See also L.L. Huang, J.H. Liu, and M.L. Chang, 'The double identity of Chinese Taiwanese: A dilemma of politics and identity rooted in history', *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 7/2 (2004), pp. 149-189, and J.H. Liu, M.W. Wilson, J. McClure and T.R. Higgins, 'Social identity and the perception of history: Cultural representations of Aotearoa/ New Zealand', *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 29 (1999), pp. 1021-1047.

regards to attitudes toward the maritime world, it nevertheless promoted a consensus of vision commensurate with the overall vision of the cult of the navy. The navy was forcefully promoted as a central pillar of identity in Britain: both as an institution and in the character of its seaman. Film was a powerful element in the promotion of this identity. Although the overall effectiveness of film propaganda has been questioned by historians,[187] the vast majority of naval films were made by commercial companies, frequently covering the same events. The sheer number of films made would seem to indicate considerable popularity and public appetite for naval fare and this was set to continue until the end of the Second World War.

[187] See with particular reference to the First World War, Nicholas Hiley, 'Cinema, spectatorship and propaganda: *The Battle of the Somme* (1916) and its contemporary audience', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 17/1 (1997), pp. 5-28.

Chapter 2: The Navy's Here!

1. Introduction

This chapter concentrates on the representation of the Royal Navy in the interwar period. It proposes three arguments: first that cinematic representations of the maritime sphere were a key part of the conscious discourse about national identity during this time. In particular it examines the role that film had to play in fostering the idea of nation and national character especially in relation to education and foreign portrayals of British history on screen. Second, that there was a clear line of continuity in the representation of the maritime sphere derived from the cult of the navy. Third, that, although the use of this configuration of maritime films during the Second World War is well-known, the crucial influence of this earlier period has been underestimated by film historians.

The chapter first gives an overview of the cinema during this time in relation to issues of national identity and propaganda. The chapter focuses on the interwar period, but the case studies also draw through the experience of earlier film and point towards related films produced later in the twentieth century. The subjects of the films in these case studies were recurrent over the course of the twentieth century. They are used here to track their development over the first third of the twentieth century: therefore this chapter does not follow a strict chronology. This is necessary to allow a discussion of both the early manifestations of the navy on screen as well as point to their influence on maritime films made during the Second World War. The case studies particularly concentrate on historical portrayals of the Royal Navy: the first three concentrate on the sailing navy: *Drake of England* (1935), *Lloyd's of London* (1936, US) *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935, US). The final section considers naval representations of the First World War on screen before looking at the example of *Forever England* (1935).

2. Cinema 1918-1939

During the interwar period the prominence of maritime subjects on film remained high although fictional features began to overtake the number of actuality films which had previously dominated. Overall the numbers of maritime films were fewer although this did not necessarily reflect a decline in popularity. The numbers can in part be explained by the fact that many of the early films were very short, some lasting just a few minutes, and would be shown as a part of a programme featuring a selection of films or other entertainments. As dedicated cinemas were built, reaching a peak in the 1930s, and technology improved, the feature length film became the norm for theatrical release. Consequently the number of individual titles became fewer. In addition, despite the increased popularity in film-going by the end of the First World War, the British film industry was in a serious decline, and over the 1920s and 1930s the British market accounted for over half of Hollywood's foreign income.[188] Globally America's market share had risen from 50% to 90%.[189] The resultant impulse to protect the British film industry led to such interventions as the 1927 Cinematograph Act which introduced the quota system[190] and the creation of the British Empire Film Institute in 1926 and the National Film Library in 1935.[191] These interventions were linked to an ongoing debate throughout the period on how cinema could represent the nation on screen. This related to the projection of a positive image of Britain abroad and the representation of the nation for itself, as well as to issues of the edification and education of the masses through film.

As was seen in the first chapter, the navy had already become established as a signifier of nation in engendering a national spirit under the threat of war. Now that the film industry itself also had an agenda to promote Britishness, maritime film was well placed to play a key role in that campaign, as well as in naval propaganda as a second world war looked increasingly likely. Questions of national identity were brought to the fore by disruption in wider political and social context of the interwar

[188] Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain*, p. 20.
[189] Bamford, *Distorted Images*, p. 6.
[190] This act required that a particular of percentage of films shown in cinemas should be British.
[191] Now the British Film Institute.

period. Prolonged periods of labour unrest and economic recession after the First World War, fears of revolution after 1917 and the rise of European dictatorships in the 1930s spelled both international instability and internal insecurity. The debate over Irish Home Rule threatened internal stability, and eventually resulted in partition and independence, whilst Scottish and Welsh nationalisms also gained in prominence. The Empire that had to a certain extent bound Britain together came under increasing internal and external pressure. This sparked domestic concerns over its sustainability when attempts to maintain it by force were perceived to have failed during the Boer War and then in the early 1920s. The debates over the extension of the franchise and the implications for democratic politics from that extension after 1918 prompted fears of class conflict.

These factors had major implications for films both thematically and for the debates that surrounded their potential uses. Richard's notes moments of disruption inevitably bring questions of identity to the fore, as 'identity is at the heart of the national propaganda effort'.[192] As Taylor points out, however, at the end of the First World War government bodies wanted to distance themselves from propaganda which had attracted criticism in the press, even though overall it had been perceived as a successful campaign. The word itself came to be associated with manipulation and misinformation and officials became sceptical of using any kind of publicity and the official propaganda machine was disbanded.[193] There were however, significant factions, particularly within the Foreign Office, that thought it was a mistake to cease propaganda efforts especially with regards to Britain's image abroad. This was addressed in particular by Sir Stephen Tallents whose pamphlet on projecting Britain on film gained particular prominence.[194]

British Pathe's short film, *Our Britain*, (c1919), indicates the common images that could be taken as representing the nation at the end of the First World War. It is a montage set to the lyrics of *Rule Britannia* and *Land of Hope and Glory*, the opening shots of which are dedicated to the fleet and military display. The institutions of

[192] Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 85.
[193] Philip M. Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century: Selling Democracy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), pp. 66-7. Both the Ministry of Information and Crewe House were disbanded at the end of 1918.
[194] Ibid., p. 67.

monarchy, Parliament and the law are symbolised in images of Buckingham Palace, the Houses of Parliament and the Old Bailey. These are combined with typically British landscapes from the countryside and the seaside. This can be compared to the images suggested as important some ten years later, in Stephen Tallents'[195] 1932 manifesto for the portrayal of the nation. Tallents argued that: '...we must master the art of national projection and must set ourselves to throw a fitting presentation of England upon the world's screen'.[196] He was calling for a new direction in presenting the strengths of a contemporary Britain especially in terms of manufacture, and drew up a list of what he considered to be the key traditional institutions and traits;

> *The Monarchy*
> *Parliamentary Institutions*
> *The British Navy*
> *The English Bible, Shakespeare* and *Dickens...*
> In international affairs- *a reputation for disinterestedness.*
> In national affairs – *a tradition of justice, law and order.*
> In national character- *a reputation for coolness.*
> In commerce – *a reputation for fair dealing.*
> In manufacture – *a reputation for quality...*
> *The Derby...the Grand National...Trooping of the Colour, the Boat Race, Henley, Wimbledon, the Test Matches...the Cup Final.*[197]

As discussed by Richards, the call for a positive image on screen was a critical opinion shared by two main groups although for different reasons:

> One group, centred on the documentarists and left-wingers, wanted films about current social problems and about working class life at home and in the factory... But another group wanted propaganda for British institutions such as the monarchy and Empire...It was the then 'acceptable face of Britain' that Tallents wanted the cinema to project...[198]

The Royal Navy was a major aspect of this 'acceptable face' as had been the case in the late nineteenth century: whereas the maritime industries, as will be seen in the next chapter, were more often the province of the documentarists. Concentration on the Royal Navy therefore reflected a cinema that rarely represented day-to-day reality

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[195] Sir Stephen Tallents (1884-1958): civil servant and PR expert who served for the Ministry of Food, The Empire Marketing Board, The GPO and the BBC.

[196] Stephen Tallents, *The Projection of England* (London: Faber, 1932), p. 39.

[197] Ibid., p. 14. Omissions to this quote are Tallents' comments on the items listed; the list is complete, italics in original.

[198] Jeffrey Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace: Cinema and Society 1930-1939* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), pp. 248-249.

for the working classes,[199] a selective approach that was never totally abandoned even during the Second World War, when issues of domestic morale and manpower shortage encouraged cinematic recognition of wider social experience. There was also a gap between the films that were generally popular with working class audiences and the critical reception of such films. This was a symptom of a divide between public taste and intellectual attitudes to cinema. As Le Mathieu explores, the debate was stoked by the dominance of American cinema. He suggests that intellectuals during the 1920s; 'feared that American influences would buttress materialistic and egalitarian values which they argued were inimical to British culture and society'.[200] Likewise McKibbin argues that:

> Contemporaries thought the cinema was a uniquely powerful medium. The country's elites were persistently worried about its potentially subversive effects on England's politics and morality. They particularly feared the influence of the United States and its 'democracy' on what was thought to be the structured and stable social hierarchy of England.'[201]

Popular film was seen to relegate aesthetics in favour of the commercial. Instead, intellectual critics would have preferred it to raise the levels of public taste. Le Mathieu argues that by the 1930s these views had softened. In response to the Depression and improved film production there was a less judgemental approach to mass taste. This made the 1930s: 'a crucial decade in the emergence of a culture that transcended the usual boundaries of class, region, and other determinants of public taste'.[202] As this chapter will show, however, in its analysis of the reception of *Lloyd's of London*, by the mid-1930s this shift was far from complete.

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[199] Ibid., p. 297.
[200] LeMathieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, p. 3.
[201] Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 455.
[202] LeMathieu, *A Culture for Democracy*., pp .3-4.

3. The Admiralty and Film in the interwar period

Although it is usually considered to have been highly reticent in taking part in film at this time,[203] the Admiralty had in fact up until 1927 co-operated on twelve British films which featured the navy, with two more in production.[204] They co-operated on three large scale filmed re-enactments of the major First World War sea battles: *The Battle of Jutland* (1921); *Zeebrugge* (1924); and *The Battles of Coronel and Falkland Islands* (1927) which are discussed in the section on representations of the First World War in this chapter. It is sometimes incorrectly argued that the Admiralty was only involved in documentary films until the making of *Forever England* (1935).[205] However, half of the films with which it had been involved were fictional including: *Nelson: The Story of England's Immortal Hero, The Flag Lieutenant,*[206] *Sailor's Don't Care* (1928), *Second to None* (1926), *Carry On* (1927) and *The Luck of the Navy* (1927) .

Admiralty co-operation on film between 1921 and 1928 was particularly concentrated and exceeded the number of films with which other Government departments were involved.[207] This was most likely a response to questions of disarmament in this period and a consequent desire for positive publicity in the face of budgetary cuts. At the end of the war, with the scuttling of the German High Seas Fleet, Royal Navy ships accounted for approximately 50% of the world's remaining effective warships of all classes.[208] This figure was checked however by the naval treaties of Washington (1921) and London (1931) to limit the extent of global naval rearmament between the

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[203] Mackenzie, *British War Films*, p. 3.

[204] Lieut.-Colonel Headlem, Cinematograph Films (Admiralty Assistance), 211 H.C. Deb. 5s. 14 December 1927, col. 2324W.

[205] Quoted in Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, p. 293, sourced from Geoff Brown (ed.), *Walter Forde* (London: British Film Institute, 1977), p. 35. The original error came from an interview with the director Walter Forde.

[206] It is unclear which version they worked on as there are two productions of the same name, (Percy Nash,1919) and (Maurice Elvey, 1926): it was most likely the Elvey version as he previously worked with the Admiralty on *Nelson*.

[207] 'The Film World: Government Help in Production', *Times*, 1 February, 1928.

[208] J. R. Hill and Bryan Ranft (eds), *The Oxford Illustrated History of the Royal Navy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 319.

wars.[209] In addition there were internal cuts to the defence budget, the figures for which hit an interwar low in 1932. The effects of the Ten Year Rule introduced in 1919, which worked on the assumption that Britain would not be involved in major conflict for another 10 years partially informed an argument for lower naval estimates: this is, however contested by Ferris and Edgerton who have both shown that Britain continued to invest heavily in defence between the wars although after 1933 began to fall behind as its potential enemies accelerated arms spending.[210] Whether or not the Royal Navy was weakened between the wars as severely as its subsequent historians have sometimes suggested, the key point is that in this period the navy was conscious that its status was potentially threatened both from international competitors and from public opinion, if left unconverted, at home. As Taylor points out, with the conclusion of the First World War there were many who had hoped that the experience would put an end to war as a solution for international conflict and lessen the need for full armament.[211] As a result he identifies that there was a 'need to re-educate the British public about the need for rearmament' especially towards the mid 1930s when there was another heavy concentration of maritime based films.[212] In addition to these factors there was an increasing belief that in any coming war air power would become paramount. As Lavery suggests 'for the first time in modern history, the Royal Navy felt the need to justify its existence to the public,' and taking inspiration from Hendon RAF displays they instigated Navy Weeks in port towns from 1929.[213]

While the Admiralty did not have a formal policy of involvement in film, and rarely undertook the role of producer themselves, they nevertheless took advantage of the prolific output of commercial producers in the interest of the navy. These films generally reflected the Victorian configuration of maritime history in emphasising Britain's tradition of seapower and the exemplary character of the British seaman. They were not nuanced in detailing particular complications faced by the navy. For

[209] In particular The Treaty of Washington 1920/1 and The London Naval Treaty, 1930.
[210] See John Ferris 'Treasury Control, the Ten Year Rule, and British Service Policies, 1919-1924', *Historical Journal*, 30/4 (1987), pp. 859-883, and David Edgerton, *Warfare State: Britain 1920-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 21-23.
[211] Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, p. 88.
[212] Ibid., p. 90.
[213] Lavery, *Hostilities Only*, p.13.

example Maiolo has argued that naval strategy in the interwar period gave the Admiralty no choice but to support Chamberlain's appeasement policy in 1937.[214] There were no naval films which advocated, or came close to advocating such an approach at any point in the period: in fact the opposite was true, especially demonstrated by the spate of Elizabethan films which all showed appeasement with Philip II of Spain to be futile. The 1931 Invergordon Mutiny which saw industrial action taken by sailors in the British Atlantic Fleet after a proposed 10% pay cut during the Depression was also not represented on film: certainly not in fictional film which would in any case have been censored[215] and seemingly not on newsreel.[216] On film the view of the navy was unswervingly positive throughout the period.

4. Interwar Representations of the Maritime on Film

The most significant development for the maritime film was the increase in the number of feature length fictional productions. These enabled a greater commentary on the social climate and the characterisation of the seaman than actuality films. The scenarios were frequently drawn from literature,[217] historical incident[218] and from the West End stage.[219] As such they often promoted the conservative values discussed in Chapter 1, tended to concentrate on the Royal Navy and primarily concerned middle and upper class characters. The significant number of maritime non-naval films in the period which were more likely to draw upon the roots of documentary and music hall are discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 respectively.

As before the war West End plays often placed the naval officer within a domestic setting rather than at sea, where he was generally the eligible bachelor, fiancée to the

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[214] Joseph A. Maiolo, *The Royal Navy and Nazi Germany 1933-1939: A Study in Appeasement and the Origins of the Second World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p. 194.

[215] Censorship rules at this time largely prevented the depiction of industrial action on screen: this is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

[216] Searches of the BFI Film and Television Database, British Pathe's archive and the BUFVC News on Screen Database yield no results for newsreel reports of the strike. The incident was however used as Communist propaganda in a Soviet film called *Seaman Clarence and a Mutiny* (1934) 'Soviet Film of the Navy', *Times* 14 April, 1934.

[217] For example: *Westward Ho!* (1919); *Robinson Crusoe* (1926);

[218] For example: *The Romance of Lady Hamilton* (1919); *Sea Dogs of Good Queen Bess* (1922), *Nelson* (1926);

[219] For example: *The Flag Lieutenant* (1919, 1926, 1932); *The Luck of the Navy, The Admiral's Secret* (1934), *The Midshipmaid*

young lady of the house or seen to save civilians, usually from foreign spies and saboteurs. Naval dramas were not uncommon, with, as a *Times* review of a play on the Boxer Rebellion commented the 'inevitable naval lieutenant' rushing in to save the day.[220] Colville insists of the period between 1930 and 1960 'that naval and civilian spheres were linked and mutually informing.'[221] While of course it is impossible for the navy to exist in a vacuum unaffected by the society in which it operates and vice versa, it is perhaps a point that was more obvious in the first third of the twentieth century when the naval officer was clearly used to represent the figure of the ideal Briton. If the naval officer had been seen as distanced from civilian society then the West End play was one of the ways in which the navy was brought into the domestic setting. The same productions were often recreated for the screen and this informed the discussion of British values on film. A prime example of was *The Luck of the Navy* which had first appeared in the West End in 1918 and was adapted for the screen in 1927. A spy scenario, both the play and the film were set mostly in a country house rather than at sea. The 'breezy' naval officer, the 'delightful and spirited' midshipman and the 'retired still vigorous Admiral' were very much examples of the upper-middle-class officers that Colville contends monopolised the upper ranks of the navy during this period. Their characteristics he suggests could be summarised as: 'duty, self control, discipline, conformity and leadership ability, in combination with a specific set of social skills...loosely labelled 'good manners.'[222] He argues that to be a naval officer was on a par with being a member of an exclusive middle class club that conferred 'considerable social status' and that membership was virtually impossible for the lower classes:

> the Admiralty, and to a considerable extent British society as a whole, commonly portrayed this re-formed gentlemanliness as somehow congenital in the offspring of a certain section of the population, and absent amongst the rest. However it was a learned identity; and in its desire to reproduce class divisions the way of life the Admiralty held out to its thirteen-year-old officer cadets and their families tacitly extended a tuition in gentlemanly attributes; the way of life it held out to ratings tacitly withheld that. As a result, the navy's officer cadre became, to a large extent, a social and cultural caste. [223]

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[220] See review of 'A Pot of Caviar', *Times* 20 April, 1910.

[221] Colville, 'Introduction,' in *The Role of Material Culture in Constructing Class Related Identities among Royal Naval Personnel 1930-1960,* unpaginated.

[222] Colville, 'Jack Tar and the Gentleman Officer', p. 107.

[223] Ibid., p. 107.

Evidence for these kind of views could certainly be discerned in cinematic portrayals, although it was perhaps more obvious in scenarios (mostly from plays) that directly placed the naval officer in a civilian rather than naval context. There were, also, as will be seen in the case studies, and in the study of comedy in Chapter 5 that there were also cinematic challenges to this view, which extended the 'congenital' sea in the blood, and its gentlemanliness to the lower classes before the films of the Second World War.

In terms of subject it was the contemporary navy that was the concern of the majority of naval films, and the spy scenario continued to be popular especially as the Second World War looked increasingly likely. There was, however, also a small core of historical films that focussed on Drake or Nelson that attracted particular attention. Between 1912 and 1935 there were more British films made about these central figures than at any other time in the twentieth century. The views of Drake and Nelson represented in these films both embraced the vision of Victorian historians and underpinned the representation of naval officers in the majority of maritime films to come.

5. *Drake of England* (1935)

Drake of England was not an acclaimed film and neither is it well remembered. It has been chosen because of the particular way that it represents Drake and linked the monarchy with the navy and because it fitted ideas of how film might be used in education. This section also considers previous cultural manifestations of Drake, including the 1913 film, *Drake of England* (1913) and examines the imaginative connections that were drawn between the navy and the royal family.

5.1 Synopsis

The film recounts the exploits of Francis Drake, including his circumnavigation and the defeat of the Armada. From the beginning England is under threat from Spain and Queen Elizabeth is torn between appeasing Philip of Spain and supporting Drake. At

court Lord Burghley and the Doughty brothers are in conspiracy with the Spanish Ambassador to sabotage Drake's plans. In a sub-plot Drake secretly marries one of the ladies-in-waiting, Elizabeth Sydenam, against the wishes of the Queen, and they are later forgiven after Drake's successes.

5.2 Reception

To modern eyes, *Drake of England* seems marked out by poor production values, including ships that were very obviously models[224] and a mannered performance from the lead, Matheson Lang.[225] As a whole the production heavily reflected the 1912 pageant play on which it was based.[226] Many of the faults were apparent to contemporary reviewers, although responses to the film were generally positive. There was criticism over the 'singular absence of the sea,'[227] and of the script being 'episodic and loose knit'.[228] There was praise, however, simply on the basis that the subject of the film was Drake:

> Its faults are easily laid bare, but they should not blind filmgoers to appreciating a gallant attempt to reconstruct a glittering chapter or two of Sixteenth Century England...It is at least something to have realised that Drake was a fitting subject for a film scenario, even if the production did not know quite what to with him when they had got him.[229]

There was a wide consensus that Drake was a worthy subject and the film was made suggested viewing on this basis alone. In particular the film was recommended for children. Drake had been established as a figure of inspiration to young boys since the publication of Charles Kingsley's *Westward Ho!* in 1855 and G.A. Henty's *Under Drake's Flag* in 1883.[230] It was perhaps because of this literary tradition that films about the sea tended to invite comments from reviewers that they were particularly

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[224] 'Drake of England', *Daily Mail,* 19 December 1935.
[225] See also description in Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, p. 288.
[226] Louis N. Parker, *Drake: A Pageant Play in Three Acts* (London: John Lane, 1912). Also see Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, p. 288.
[227] 'Drake of England', *Monthly Film Bulletin,* 2/16 (1935), p. 53.
[228] Ibid.
[229] 'Drake of England', *Morning Post*, 15 May 1935.
[230] Charles Kingsley, *Westward Ho!* (London: 1855). It was adapted for film in 1919. G. A. Henty, *Under Drake's Flag* (London, Blackie & Son, 1883).

suitable for the young.[231] It was also part of a wider pedagogical impulse connected to a contemporary debate of how film should be used for the purposes of the edification and education of children.[232]

Wardour Films produced a brochure for *Drake of England* which was distributed free to schools, and a special screening was held at the Regal Cinema for headteachers: over two thousand attended.[233] *Today's Cinema* reported that '*Drake* has already been recommended by the LCC Consultative Committee as a picture which every boy and girl should see and the schools have been circularised to this effect'.[234] Almost the same words were used in a review of Maurice Elvey's 1918 film on Nelson, 'It is a picture to be seen by everybody, and most of all by every school boy and girl in the Empire'.[235] Similarly when documentary film, *The Great White Silence* (1924), about Scott's expedition was screened at Buckingham Palace subsequent prints of the film had an inter-title which quoted George V as saying 'I wish that every British boy could see this film for it would help to foster the spirit of adventure on which the Empire was founded.' When Gaumont decided to organise a series of special matinees considered suitable for children in conjunction with the Children's Cinema Council in 1929 the programme included both the *The Luck of the Navy* and *The Flag Lieutenant.*[236] The previously cited Edwardian idea of the link between an understanding of history and good citizenship underpinned the idea in this period that it was important for children to have an awareness of Britain's naval heritage.

5.3 Background

Drake of England must also be seen as one of the wave of Elizabethan dramas that broke on both sides of the Atlantic in the wake of *The Private Life of Henry VIII* (1933), the first British made film to become an international box-office success. Most of these were centred on Elizabeth I herself, including *Fire over England*

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[231] See review of *Drake* below, also: review of *Nelson* (1918), *Times,* 17 December 1918, Graham Greene on *Midshipman Easy* (1935), *Spectator,* 3 January 1936.
[232] See Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, pp. 67-88.
[233] 'Drake for Kids', *Today's Cinema*, 28 October 1935.
[234] Ibid.
[235] 'A Nelson Film', *Times,* 17 December 1918.
[236] 'The Film World', *Times,* 20 February, 1929.

(1937), *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939), and *The Sea Hawk* (1940). Richards points out the contemporary relevance of these films: 'As the shadow of Hitler fell ever darker across Europe, the struggle of Elizabeth I's England against the might of the Spanish Empire took on a new and urgent significance'.[237] It is important to note, however, that these commercial and geopolitical factors did not initiate the representation of Drake on screen. Nor were they entirely novel.

Before the First World War, the story of Drake had been mobilised as a rallying call in a similar way. As previously discussed the historical moment of Elizabethan England became of particular significance during the nineteenth century as the centre of the myth of the origins of English nation. The audience was likely to have knowledge of Drake's story and its symbolism. *Drake of England* fell into the category that Shafer identifies as:

> ...the prevalence of this "Pro Patria" emphasis in a wide range of ...film...and the occasional appearance of overt celebrations of a kind of national identity make it clear that British filmgoers during this period [1929-1939] were very familiar with plots and stories designed to remind them of the glorious islands on which they were fortunate enough to live.[238]

In the case of Drake, it is possible to look back to two previous representations, one on stage and one on screen, which contributed to this familiarity and formed the basis of the 1935 film. These configured the relationship between the monarch, the state, and the navy in a particular way for propagandistic purpose.

5.4 *Drake: A Pageant Play* and *Drake's Love Story*

Drake of England was very faithful to Parker's original 1912 pageant play, lifting many of the speeches wholesale. It was also the basis for the 1913 film *Drake's Love Story* which used the same plot scenarios and characters.[239] It is therefore worth considering some of the background and reception to Parker's pageant.

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[237] Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, p. 286.

[238] Stephen C. Shafer, *British Popular Films 1929-1939: The Cinema of Reassurance* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 220.

[239] This film no longer exists and it is not possible to say how closely it followed the play. John Sugden in his book, *Sir Francis Drake*, p. 318, claims that the film was based on the play but gives no

Parker had a particular agenda in his work. He was concerned to promote what he considered to be an appropriate patriotism and local identities which should be fostered to achieve a national unity.[240] He had begun by devising regional pageants performed by local people. He believed that through participation in pageants, residents would come to understand the bearing of historical continuity and see it as a living thing, and hence become more protective of their heritage.[241] This sense of paternalism links directly with the later impulse to use *Drake of England* educationally.

The play was a consciously patriotic piece and like with a number of other theatre productions, one performance was used to raise funds for the Navy League.[242] The sentiment of the play is reflected in the rallying cry at the end after the defeat of the Armada, which was also used in edited form at the end of *Drake of England*:

> We have opened the gates of the Sea, we have given you the keys of the world. The little spot ye stand on has become the centre of the earth. From this day forward the English merchant can rove whither he will, and no man shall say him nay...See that ye hold fast the heritage we leave you...Yea and teach your children its value: that never in the coming centuries their hearts may fail them, or their hands grow weak!...Men of England! Hither we have been too much afraid! Henceforth we shall fear only God![243]

The programme for the original production in 1912 had an article by Arnold White,[244] who described Parker's play 'as a lesson to present-day English men,' essentially in preparing for the forthcoming crisis with Germany.[245] He wrote an essay on the pageant demonstrating how clearly he saw the message of the play:

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reference. However the fictionalised circumstances of Drake's marriage to Sydenam described in reviews of the film suggest a strong influence from the play, as Parker seems the only source for this particular narrative.

[240] Louis N. Parker, 'Pageants Historical', *Society of Arts Journal*, 54 (1905), p. 143.

[241] Parker, 'Pageants Historical', p. 143.

[242] 'The Theatres', *Times*, 16 December 1912.

[243] Parker, *Drake*, p. 116.

[244] The controversial journalist, who had infamously leaked a private letter of Beresford's to the press outlining deficiencies in the fleet. White served on the executive committee of the Navy League and vigorously campaigned for fleet development.

[245] 'Londoners Flock to Patriotic Play', *New York Times*, 8 September 1912.

> In Elizabethan chronicles of the Armada we read no loud lamentations at the absence of a Two Power Standard...Drake's consummate seamanship and audacious courage counted for a dozen ships of the line. Drake's personality is compelling; he is not dead but living. The Navy of Britain is the custodian of freedom for the world, and the tradition that still stirs the blood of our people, at home and beyond sea, is the tradition of Drake.[246]

It was in this climate that *Drake's Love Story* was released. It was primarily reviewed in terms of its 'Englishness'. This was seen as important in itself as well as in terms of the prestige of the British film industry. Just as the later *Drake of England* it was judged on the appropriateness of the subject. The *Lantern Weekly* reported,

> Beautiful as are so many of the settings in the photo-plays which come from abroad, none of them can compare in simple beauty with the scenes with which the Hepworth Company have provided for *Drake's Love Story*. First and last it is an English play in an English setting, and as such it will undoubtedly have a multitude of admirers when shown in the picture theatres throughout the country.[247]

Similarly, from the *Bioscope*:

> One's first sensation in seeing this very fine production by the Hepworth Company is a feeling of gratification that the splendid chapter of English history which it represents has been immortalised in pictures not by a foreign firm but by a company essentially and entirely British. For too long we have been forced to endure the ignominy of having our first literary masterpieces and our noblest historical passages flung back in our faces as it were by people of another land...we must all be ready to appreciatively recognise the laudable efforts of Messrs Hepworth...to establish the art of film manufacture in quite as high and as national a basis in our own as in other countries.[248]

Just as with *Drake of England*, the qualities of the production itself were of secondary importance in reviews in comparison to the symbolism of Drake being presented by a British company on screen. In the aftermath of the First World War attitudes towards foreign movies which tackled British history continued to be hostile. For example a 1921 *Times* article feared that the mass 'indiscriminate' audience could be indoctrinated by foreign film propaganda. It suggested that the 'resourceful' German now:

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[246] Arnold White, *Drake: An Essay, suggested by the play of that name* (London: Miles, 1912), pp. 7-8.
[247] 'Drake's Love Story', *Lantern Weekly*, 27 February 1913.
[248] 'Drake's Love Story', *Bioscope*, 27 February 1913.

> ...seeks to conquer the world in the capacity of public entertainer, and he would greatly like to exploit the British screen...for the weakness of the British public is its innocent receptiveness. It swallows the Dago; is there not a risk it may swallow the Teuton?...One German film which our correspondent mentions is about Henry VIII. Why should the Germans present us with scenes from our own history? Let Bluff Hal be an Englishman, and let Englishman produce his story. We want, or rather wish we could say that we want, English scenes, whether from history or novels...translated for us through the cinematograph by actors of our own breeding.[249]

Implicit was a fear of the sheer power of film propaganda that could only be counteracted by the British representing their own history. For this to happen the article suggested that the 'standard of British taste and knowledge of the world' needed vast improvement: that is edification and education. Education, however, that was based on race and upon particular the particular configurations of British history and identity which had been laid out at the beginning of the century.

5.5 The Representation of Elizabeth, State and Navy

The *New York Times* said of Parker's pageant play in 1912 that:

> There is no question here of documentary exactitude of the real Drake, the real Elizabeth. What you get is a gallery of quasi-historical figures, frankly idealized, turned as it were to propagandists of England as the great sea power. That idea gives the play its unity; Drake is its outward and visible embodiment.[250]

This American view could be equally applied to the two films: everything is designed to align Elizabeth with her navy. Much of the action in all three productions takes place at court, and the characters are all elevated in status to courtiers to enable Elizabeth to be at the centre and privy to them all. Drake is not initially part of that inner circle and Burghley and the Doughty brothers resent his humble birth. What is important here is that Drake is cast very much as a naval captain who is made a gentleman through his prowess at sea, hinting at naval meritocracy. He is characterised through his devotion to the crown and not represented as the

[249] 'The Pictures', *Times*, 19 August, 1921.
[250] 'Mute Heroism of the Theatre', *New York Times*, 15 September 1912.

swashbuckling pirate. Although Burghley and Doughty may have been 'gentleman' their status is compromised by their lack of chivalry, fair play and disloyalty to the crown. The idea that being a gentleman was not simply a matter of birth, but a matter of adherence to particular codes of behaviour is clear in the film. It is Drake that proves worthy of marriage to Sydenham rather than Doughty. In addition Drake is placed for the most part in a domestic setting in an English landscape and an English stately home thus evoking other traditional tropes: showing what was being defended rather than the adventure at sea.

This pivotal relationship between Elizabeth and her sailors is a common feature of later Elizabethan films such as such as *Fire over England* (1937), *The Sea Hawk* (1940), *Seven Seas to Calais* (1962) and the ITC 1960s series *Sir Francis Drake.* Richards says of *Fire over England:*

> The film subtly equates the monarch with monarchy, the monarchy with the nation and the nation with the virtues of freedom, justice and truth, so that each basks in the reflected glory of the other and the defence of them, if necessary by war, is validated.[251]

The crucial omission from this equation is the navy. The navy is the means of reassurance in the films that ensures a victory is possible and that Britain is safe from invasion. Over time, the association of monarchy with naval related films became reflexive, as the films that the Royal Family chose to view became the subject of media interest. Private viewings aside, all the films that they saw at public cinemas in the early years of the screen were either naval or in aid of a military charity.[252] These were almost certainly political, as well as personal choices. The King and Queen attended *Zeebrugge* (1924) in aid of Lord Haig's British Legion Fund. [253] In 1927 they went to a special performance of *The Flag Lieutenant* (1926) in aid of King George's Fund for Sailors.[254] In 1929 the Duke of York was present at a special screening of *The Epic of the South Pole*,[255] charting the expedition of Captain Scott.

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[251] Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, p. 287.

[252] A check of the *Times* digital archive for this period has not located a single film attended by the King in this period which was not based on the navy. The *Times* religiously reported royal movements, so it is highly unlikely that a cinema visit would have gone unrecorded.

[253] 'The Film World: The Attack on Zeebrugge', *Times*, 3 November 1924.

[254] 'The King and Queen at a Cinema', *Times*, 4 May 1927.

[255] Film made by Herbert Ponting and released in various editions in 1911 as *With Captain Scott RN to the South Pole* with a second edition with the same title in 1912, as *The Great White Silence* (1924) and *90°South* (1933).

Rear Admiral Evans, Scott's second-in-command, requested that the Duke accept the film on behalf of the British Empire Film Institute and the nation as the first item for the Empire Library of British films.[256] This was not the first time that the film had been shown to royalty, as the director Ponting had relentlessly toured his film. This included a screening at Buckingham Palace, as well as exhibition to over 100,000 troops during the First World War.[257] As the first film considered as being worthy to be kept for the nation it underlined the centrality of naval activity, and indeed the significance of naval film, to British ideals of endeavour and character embodied in Scott.[258]

The monarchy enjoyed a heightened profile in 1935 as the twenty-fifth anniversary of George V's reign encouraged countrywide celebration. Britain faced a declining economy, a declining Empire as well as potential threats from European dictatorships. Film-makers, filmgoers and reviewers, as well as the state, may therefore have found it attractive to capitalise on the institution that provided a sense of unity by linking it to the golden age of Elizabeth. This may help to explain why *Drake of England* was chosen as the as the film presented in aid of King George's Jubilee Trust, set up that year to provide funding for youth activities.[259]

5.6 The Portrayal of Drake and Invasion Fears

In the three productions based on Parker's play it is the experience of Elizabeth's seamen and their knowledge of Spanish intelligence which convince her to support conflict with Spain rather than continue to appease Philip of Spain. This is resolutely

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[256] 'Scott Film for the Nation: Presentation to the Duke of York', *Times* 27 February 1929.

[257] Bryony Dixon, 'The Great White Silence', BFI Screenonline available at www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/1398645/index.html [accessed 28 May 2011].

[258] See discussion of cultural impact of Scott in Gill Plain, *John Mills and British Cinema: Masculinity, Identity and Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 112-116. Frank Hurley's film *Shackleton's expedition to the South Pole* (1914-17) had certain parallels in being first released as silent film with a sound version made in 1933, although it was not accorded the same prestige or coverage as Ponting's film despite being a critical success (see 'Shackleton on the Screen', *Times* 17 December 1919). This may have been due to the timing as the expedition took place during the First World War which of course dominated the news. While well known the expedition did not seem to have the same cultural resonance as that of Scott. There seems to have been a Shackleton renaissance in the 1990s, for example photographs from the expedition were exhibited for the first time in 70 years at the Royal Geographic Society. The first fictional film about Shackleton was made in 2002 by Channel 4.

[259] 'Regal Cinema: Drake of England', *Times*, 15 May 1935.

portrayed as the only right action because Burghley and the Doughty brothers, who are in favour of appeasement, are seen to be in league with the Spanish Ambassador for their own gain. This is not simply a matter of offering a justification for leading England into war. It is also a warning of the enemy within. While of course he is referred to, Philip of Spain is not even a character in the films or the play. Here the true villains of the piece are insiders.

This internal conflict is relevant for three reasons. First it reflected Britain's insularity at the beginning of the century: a self-reinforcing image of the island nation. Second it was a warning to those who did not support either naval development (before the First World War) or rearmament (in preparation for the Second). Third, it indicates the widely held, enduring fear of infiltration and sabotage by foreign spies. In the build up to the Second World War and in its early stages there was a second wave of spy films, including a full length feature based on the popular First World War series hero, Daring, *Lieutenant Daring R.N.* (1936), and the highly successful *The Spy in Black* (1939).[260] The making of *Drake of England* was a part of this resurgence of the spy scenario when Britain once again found herself threatened. In the summer of 1940, this anxiety underpinned press and military demands for the mass internment of British Fascists and enemy aliens, which would result in 30,000, mostly innocent, people being locked up without trial.

Bearing in mind the degree to which both films drew directly on it, Parker's pageant play can be said to have enjoyed remarkable longevity. The consistency of its appeal, and of reactions to it, indicate the degree to which the symbols of maritime Britishness drawn by Victorian writers persisted over the first third of the twentieth century. As well as immediate concerns about national security and identity, both politically and within the film industry, these films also demonstrated how far naval history had become embedded in British culture.

[260] See discussion by James Chapman, 'Celluloid Shockers', in Jeffrey Richards (ed.), *The Unknown 1930s: An Alternative History of the British Cinema, 1929-1939* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1998), pp. 93-95. Although Chapman notes that the spy thriller novel became popular around 1900 he says that this flourished as a film genre in the 1930s but does not point out that this was in fact the second wave of spy films.

6. *Lloyd's of London* (Henry King, 1936)

Lloyd's of London has been selected for examination as the most exceptional of the pre-war maritime history films, in that it is the only one in the entire period covered by this thesis that demonstrated the symbiotic relationship between the Merchant and the Royal Navy in an historical setting.[261] It is also unusual in that it takes a wide view of merchant shipping, rather than dealing with a single community or a single ship. This section looks at the background and reception to the film before examining the precedents for portrayals of Nelson on film in relation to *Lloyd's of London.*

The film has largely been forgotten: while some contemporaneous pre-Second World War films, such as *Fire over England*, are considered in major surveys of the Second World War films in Britain, *Lloyd's of London* barely registers. One of the reasons for this is that it was a Hollywood movie, albeit one made with a British audience in mind. This factor had implications both for the way that the film was produced and how it was received.

6.1 Synopsis

The film begins with Jonathan Blake as a childhood urchin friend of Horatio Nelson. They are shown playing together despite the disapproval of Nelson's father on account of Blake's low-born status. When the children overhear a ship-owner perpetrating an insurance scam that would wreck a ship they resolve to go to Lloyd's to report it. In the meantime Nelson's uncle arrives to offer him a place as a midshipman and Blake goes alone to London, walking all the way from Norfolk. As a reward for his information Blake gains employment at Lloyd's. Lloyd's founder John Julius Angerstein explains the purpose and principles of Lloyd's, which is also one of the major messages of the film:

[261] There are almost no representations of any part of the maritime commercial sector that have pre-twentieth century settings. It has only been possible to identify three feature films (excluding *Lloyd's of London*): *Milestones* (1916) which looks at three generations of shipyard owners from 1860-1912; *Atlantic Ferry* (1941) about Liverpool ship owners and the first steamship to make regular transatlantic crossings in 1837 and *The Silver Darlings* (1947) about the Scottish herring fishers in the age of sail and their threat from press-gangs.

> Lloyd's is founded on two great pillars: news and honest dealing. If either fail, we fail and with us the whole of the British merchant marine...Lloyd's isn't merely a business, profit and loss, it's the life blood of British commerce...just think of English ships sailing to the farthest ports in the world: Hong Kong, Cape Town, Bombay, ships and cargo protected by our honesty, a mighty commerce built on faith.

The friends are not destined to meet again, although Blake follows Nelson's career and hence the course of the Napoleonic Wars is related through him. In addition there are a small number of cut away scenes that show Nelson in action. When the French escape Nelson's blockade at Toulon and destroy hundreds of merchant vessels, Lloyd's vastly increase insurance costs and request Royal Navy convoys for merchant vessels before they will insure at the old rates. Blake, now head of a syndicate, remembering Angerstein's words, stands alone in insuring at the old rates and opposes the convoy system as it will take resources away from Nelson. He announces victory at Trafalgar before it actually happens in order to prevent an order going to Nelson to divert half of his ships. He risks his own fortune and reputation but the news of Nelson's victory comes in time to save him. Parallels are made between their lives throughout the film to emphasise their similarity in acting for the greater good regardless of personal risk. Also Blake is tested by an adulterous relationship as is Nelson. When Nelson is shot on board *Victory*, Blake is shot at the same moment by a rival. It is the news of Trafalgar that rallies him and unlike Nelson he survives. Ultimately Blake becomes as much of a hero as Nelson.

6.2 Background and Reception

Lloyd's of London was part of a spate of pro-British American movies made at this time and over the war years.[262] As Glancy has identified, this can in part be attributed to commercial reasons due to the importance of Britain to Hollywood's foreign market. In addition the rise of fascism across Europe highlighted the common ties between Britain and the United States, and this was potentially strengthened by pro-British film. Taves argues that adventure movies (in which he includes *Lloyd's of*

[262] Fully discussed in Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain.*

London) were a particularly useful vehicle as they had an 'uncontroversial period setting'.[263] In common with the other pro-British movies they reminded:

> audiences of the practical and ideological ties between the two countries, the similarities of language and culture inducing a natural reaction of empathy... With the threat of war, American and British films frequently portrayed Englishmen as personifying the very type of Anglo-American morality and virtues - fair play, democracy, equality – that formed the values on which opposition to fascism and a new European war would be fought.[264]

Lloyd's of London was deliberately made to project British values on both sides of the Atlantic and drew upon Nelson, the most celebrated of British naval heroes as well as upon Britain's merchant traditions.

This was not an insignificant movie to Twentieth Century Fox: up until that year it was the most ambitious film that they had embarked upon and it was allocated the highest budget of their films for 1936.[265] The production values were high and it was nominated for two Academy Awards for art direction and editing. The most positive aspect of the American reviews was praise for Tyrone Power as Blake and the film was significant in propelling him to international fame.[266]

British reviews tended to focus either on the film's Hollywood origins or on evaluations of the historical accuracy of the film. The dominance of the Hollywood movie was a matter of continual debate in reviews in relation to the quota system, quality, aesthetics and national cinema. As already seen British critics often felt that British historical subjects should be the province of British cinema. The *Times* review of *Lloyd's of London* commented:

> The American producer is generally at his best in describing the pioneer days of his own country, and occasionally at his worst in reconstructing the history of other countries...The Union Jack in the last few years has been vigorously and with no little effect waved by Hollywood; now it is the turn of the White

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[263] Brian Taves, *The Romance of Adventure: The Genre of Historical Adventure Movies* (Jackson.: University Press of Mississippi, 1993), p. 72.
[264] Ibid., pp. 71-72.
[265] Walter Coppedge, *Henry King's America* (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Scarecrow Press, 1986), p. 142.
[266] Ibid., p. 9. See also 'Lloyd's of London pleases at the Astor', *New York Times*, 26 November 1936.

> Ensign, and the only escape from embarrassment is to be found in the comfortable fact that the colours are faulty. The flag might well have been that of a nineteenth century Ruritania, and apart from the monotonous repetition of the words "England," "Nelson," and "Lloyd's," there was little or nothing to identify the scenes on screen with the England of the Napoleonic wars.[267]

Graham Greene in the *Spectator* also criticised the film on the grounds of the repetition of the word 'England,' claiming that it was that it was 'so frequently on the characters' lips that we recognize it at once as an American picture'.[268]

There are few sources which give an idea of audience reactions to *Lloyd's of London* although it came sixth in *Kinematograph Weekly's* 'Box Office Winners' in September 1937.[269] There are also some clues in the Mass Observation survey of cinema-going in Worktown (Bolton) taken in 1938. Despite Greene's view that the film was obviously an American production it was sometimes mistaken for a British film.[270] One man included it in a list of films that he considered 'sensible and interesting,'[271] although it had been called 'childish' in the *Times* review.[272] Another woman who expressed a preference for British films, and was not fond of 'blunt propaganda', felt that more films were 'needed along the lines' of *Lloyd's of London*.[273] The paucity of sources for public reaction means that it is not possible to draw definite conclusions, but what is available points towards a more favourable opinion from the public than from the critics.

Criticism of Hollywood films was perhaps most in evidence when it came to American filmmakers tackling British history. As already seen the contemporaneous, largely unconvincing, and historically inaccurate *Drake of England*, a British production, with a lower standard of production values than *Lloyd's of London* and generally poor reviews was praised solely because Drake was the subject of the film. The British made films of Drake based on Parker's play were not scrutinised in terms

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[267] 'New Films in London: History by Way of Names', *Times*, 12 April 1937.
[268] Graham Greene, *Spectator*, 7 May 1937, in David Parkinson (ed.), *Mornings in the Dark: The Graham Greene Film Reader* (Manchester: Carcanet, 2007), p. 198.
[269] 'Box Office Winners', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 January, 1938.
[270] 'Cinema-Going in Worktown, 1938', in Jeffrey Richards and Dorothy Sheridan (eds), *Mass-Observation at the Movies* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), p. 84.
[271] Ibid., p. 97.
[272] 'New Films in London: History by the Way of Names', *Times*, 12 April 1937.
[273] 'Cinema-Going in Worktown, 1938', in Richards and Sheridan (eds), *Mass Observation at the Movies*, p. 122.

of their historical accuracy which was almost entirely absent. In conservative British sentiment, however, they were seen as entirely authentic and perhaps this was the major point and one that the Americans either could not, or were not perceived as being able to replicate. As the earlier quotes from Le Mathieu and McKibbin indicated, the fears of the ruling elite regarding the spread of American culture were ideological and about protecting a British brand of democracy. This was not simply a matter of representing British history; it was about representing it in a framework that had parity British configurations of history and national character.

6.3 In context with previous films about Nelson

There was a feeling from the British press that Nelson should not have been a part of *Lloyd's of London* at all, in spite of the film's positive take on him:

> It is doubtful if the introduction of Nelson into the film at all is desirable. The story of his career as a whole and of the Trafalgar campaign in particular, is so well known that a revised film version is scarcely tolerable.[274]

The depiction of the key events in British history was a well established part of the British cinema. When longer narrative films began to develop in the early years of the twentieth century they were often based on stories with which an audience would already be familiar.[275] Therefore filmmakers tended to make use of maritime narratives that were already embedded in British culture. For example the longest film made in Britain in 1897 was *The Death of Nelson* (150ft) which was based on a song that was well-known at the time.[276] Nelson was already a familiar figure on film and this period saw more films made about him than any other.

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[274] J. C. F. Hearnshaw and A. C. Dabbs, '*Lloyd's of London*: An informed criticism of a film that will be generally released on September 13', *School Master and Woman Teacher's Chronicle,* 26 August 1937, p. 1.

[275] Andrew Higson, 'Cecil Hepworth, *Alice in Wonderland* and the Development of Narrative Film', in Higson (ed.), *Young and Innocent*, p. 59. There was a tendency for filmmakers to use historical subjects when embarking on major productions that broke new ground in terms of length or factors such as using famous stage actors. Rachel Low and Roger Manvell, *The History of the British Film 1896-1906* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1948), p. 200.

[276] Ibid., p. 59.

This was perhaps not surprising given the profile of the navy in the early part of the century and the Navy League's promotion of Nelson in particular. For the first time on 21 October 1895 they laid a wreath at the column in Trafalgar Square in commemoration of the Battle of Trafalgar and Nelson's death. Prior to this celebration of Trafalgar Day had only taken place within the navy but this gesture inspired a much bigger occasion the following year which saw events around the country.[277] The centenary celebrations in 1905 brought further attention to both the cause of the Navy League and to Nelson. These celebrations were captured on film and so reached an even bigger audience. Examples included: *The Nelson Column* (1897) filmed on Trafalgar Day and *The Nelson Centenary* (1905).

Between 1900 and 1935 there were five fictional British productions, one German and one American production that featured Nelson as a main character.[278] In addition to the British fictional films there were a number of documentary features, and semi-documentaries, such as *The Romance of H.M.S Victory* (1923).[279] This was made as part of a campaign to save HMS *Victory* and comprised a succession of images of old prints to tell the story, but had an enactment of the death of Nelson filmed on board the ship.

Czisnik points out that the British productions of the early period generally avoided dwelling on Nelson's affair with Lady Hamilton and concentrated on his career.[280] The affair was often seen as the least honourable part of his life and had been played down in Victorian histories and subsequently on British film. Both of the foreign-made films concentrated on Lady Hamilton and thus distorted the image of Nelson as the ideal Briton. It is not clear if the German *Lady Hamilton* was released in Britain because of a ban imposed during the First World War and for some time after on the distribution of German film. It was however still reviewed, most unfavourably, by the *Times*:

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[277] Czisnik, *Horatio Nelson*, p. 125.
[278] *Incidents in the Life of Lord Nelson* (1905); *Nelson's Victory* (1907); *Nelson: The Story of England's Immortal Hero* (1918); *The Romance of Lady Hamilton* (1919); *Nelson* (1926); *Lady Hamilton* (1921, DE); *The Divine Lady* (1929, US).
[279] For example *Nelson's Flag Ship* HMS *Victory* (1898), *Incidents from the Battle of Trafalgar* (1901), *Popular Incidents in the Life of Lord Nelson* (1905), *Naval Warfare in Nelson's Time* (1928).
[280] Czisnik, *Horatio Nelson*, p. 140.

> A film was produced in Berlin a few days ago, which was based on the life of Lord Nelson, and was admitted to be technically good. But the film was far more concerned with Lady Hamilton than with its hero. Lady Hamilton was given an unpleasant character, and in this subtle way, indirect discredit was thrown on one of England's great national heroes...[281]

The Divine Lady (1929) was criticised too for its emphasis on Lady Hamilton: 'I am the one thing that England will never allow you to have,' remarks Lady Hamilton to Lord Nelson in the course of this film. But she is apparently the one thing that America now insists on him having'.[282] No foreign made films concerning Nelson in this period received good reviews in Britain, unlike British productions which were always received favourably regardless of any shortcomings. The *Times* review of Maurice Elvey's *Nelson* said there was 'little to criticise' but went on to say that the crowd scenes and the Arctic scenes were unconvincing, there was an anti-climatic tableau, and that the diagrams of the Battle of Trafalgar were more interesting than the scenes of the battle. Yet it was seen as a 'notable British production,' and: 'taken as a whole the film is one of the best things that English producers have attained to as yet. If there were any minor faults the shade of Nelson would doubtless turn his blind eye to the screen'.[283]

This comparison suggests that there were attempts to protect the image of the navy and again to suggest that the heritage of Nelson was a subject that should be left to British producers. The early British films' presentation of Nelson tended to confirm the chronology of the Victorian historians. It emphasised Nelson's heroic status and drew upon images that had already established in fiction; essentially Nelson as the great patriot, fighting hero who cared deeply about his men.[284] It was a confirmation that took place at the intersection between audiences, filmmakers, reviewers and the state.

The Admiralty was keen to protect the image of the navy on film and in particular to avoid naval scenarios as the setting for romantic interludes, a category into which the films that focussed on Lady Hamilton fell:

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[281] 'German Films: Proposed Removal of the Ban', *Times*, 13 December 1921.
[282] '*The Divine Lady*', *Times*, 28 May 1929, p.14.
[283] 'Nelson on Film: A Notable British Production', *Times*, 29 January 1919.
[284] Czisnik, *Horatio Nelson*, p. 138.

> ...there is the romantic film, which deals with supposed scenes of naval life, and that is the kind of film which many people hold it is desirable should be made as accurate as possible, because we do not want the Navy to be made ridiculous on a film or anywhere else. At the same time, certain officers think it undesirable that naval ratings and officers should be employed in that kind of film, and the view of the Admiralty is much the same. Therefore, in a romantic film we do not give the assistance that we do in the other two kinds [i.e. 'serious' films and documentary].[285]

Unlike the foreign-made films, including *Lloyd's of London*, the British films tended to emphasise the modern Royal Navy. They drew an explicit line of continuity from the age of sail to the present rather than using history as pure metaphor in films such as *Lloyd's of London* and *The Sea Hawk*. This is particularly clear in Maurice Elvey's 1918 *Nelson*, which begins with Admiral Sir Robert Fremantle,[286] as himself, recounting the history of navy and empire to a young boy (again underlining the aim of teaching the young). As he speaks shots are shown of the modern fleet, with particular emphasis on showing the Empire-wide stretch of the navy. There is footage, for example, of HMAS *Australia* underlined as 'Australia's gift to the Empire'. Fremantle gives brief details of King Alfred and Drake before mentioning how Nelson saved England. This is immediately linked to the present as he says how recently the navy saved England again when 'threatened by a tyrant'. The boy is so enthralled by these tales that the Admiral starts to read Southey's *Life of Nelson* to him and Nelson's life is shown in flashback. The chronology as written by the Victorian historians was underlined visually in the film. Nelson returns from a voyage delirious with malaria and in a dream he visited by Alfred the Great, Drake and finally the fictional goddess Britannia (the chronological supply of naval heroes having apparently dried up).

The commercial side of shipping barely featured in British productions of any kind. Although this aspect is in fact by far the greater part of *Lloyd's of London*, criticisms of the representation of Lloyd's were infrequent in comparison to those of the portrayal of Nelson. The configuration of British maritime history meant that the

[285] Lieut.-Colonel Headlam, Navy Estimates, 214 H.C. Deb. 5s 15 March 1928, col. 2252.
[286] Fremantle was also a prominent member of the Navy League.

merchant scene was far less generally known, and had little precedent in fictional film.

Lloyd's of London demonstrated that duty and patriotism were also required from the commercial sector and that heroism was not restricted to the military. One of the features of naval films made later during the Second World War was a greater acknowledgement of the merchant marine. Although merchant and naval vessels had been brought together in convoys since the start of the war, the critical state of British imports thanks to a combination of strategic overstretch and attacks by German submarines lead to a heightened awareness of the battle the two forces were fighting in the Atlantic. Many film scenarios drew on this aspect of the war and referenced the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy working together albeit with an emphasis upon the Royal Navy. None of these, however, approached the theme in a similar way to *Lloyd's of London*: all dealt with cargoes as tools of survival rather than instruments of commerce.

Few productions featured Nelson as a central character in the latter half of the twentieth century.[287] There were also few British maritime films that did not make passing reference to him. This was particularly the case during the Second World War, primarily in films that featured the navies but often in those about the other armed forces. There are many examples and they are incorporated in a variety of ways. In *San Demetrio London* (1943) a British and an American sailor play a game of darts. The British sailor declares that he requires a 'Nelson' (one hundred and eleven) and explains it to the American, 'One eye, one arm, one ambition'. In *Sailors Three* (1940) Tommy Trinder performs a song called 'England Expects Every Man to Do His Duty'. Another sailor trapped on board a German vessel has a tattoo of Nelson on his chest, which is swiftly changed into Hitler with the addition of a moustache, but when he turns round he has 'Rule Britannia' and a Union Jack on his back which betray his true nationality. When sailors are recalled from leave in *We Dive at Dawn* (1943) their friend quips 'Better get going, England expects you know'. As Rayner identifies: 'The affinity of the British naval film for highlighting naval tradition, and its specific Nelsonian allusion, reflect an assumption of familiarity and

[287] *That Hamilton Woman* (1941, US), *Bequest to the Nation* (1973).

ideological sympathy with a recognisable, communal history in the British film audience...'[288] Emphasis on naval tradition was a facet that became entrenched in the portrayal of the navy on film regardless of the period in which the film was set.

7. *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935)

Mutiny on the Bounty has been chosen as the one of the most successful and well-known films of the period. It also represents one of the few critical portraits of a British naval officer and thus is particularly instructive in terms of how appropriate command is represented on screen. As an American production the critical reactions to the film were markedly different in comparison to foreign portrayals of Nelson and the case study considers why it was possible for *Mutiny on the Bounty* to achieve a measure of critical approval of the British press which often eluded other foreign representations of British maritime history.

7.1 Synopsis

HMS *Bounty* has been commissioned to voyage to Tahiti for a cargo of breadfruit plants to be used as a cheap food source for slaves in the West Indies. The film opens with Fletcher Christian, second-in-command, leading a pressgang and taking unwilling men from a tavern in Portsmouth. Roger Byam, an idealistic midshipman and protégé of Sir Joseph Banks, is seen taking leave from his mother for what will be his first voyage. The *Bounty* is under the command of Captain Bligh, a harsh disciplinarian with little respect for his crew, but with a reputation as a prodigious seaman. The voyage is arduous under Bligh's regime of frequent punishment, short rations and adverse weather conditions. Tension begins to mount especially between Bligh and Christian who treats the men with humanity. When they reach Tahiti, however, the men have an idyllic time on the island and Christian falls in love with a native girl. Once they set sail the crew find it harder to bear Bligh's command, and Christian leads a mutiny. Byam is unsuccessful in trying to prevent it. Bligh and those loyal to him are set adrift in an open boat with provisions and a compass but

[288] Jonathan Rayner, 'The Film Star of Trafalgar: Nelsonian Imagery and Allusion in Naval Film', *Trafalgar Chronicle*, 17 (2007), p. 242.

Byam does not join them in time. The mutineers return to Tahiti. In a phenomenal feat of navigation Bligh manages to take his remaining crew to safety and they all reach England. In command of the *Pandora*, Bligh returns to Tahiti intending to bring the mutineers to justice. Christian and the majority his crew escape on the *Bounty*. Byam, along with a small group join Bligh on the *Pandora* intending to return to duty but Bligh puts them in irons below, rescuing them just in time when the ship is lost. They face trial in England; Bligh is exonerated although it is clear that the court does not condone his brutality. Byam and the others are sentenced to death. Sir Joseph Banks and his friends petition the King on Byam's behalf and he is reprieved and returns to service. Christian takes his crew and their native wives to the remote Pitcairn Islands where they make their home, and after wrecking the *Bounty* on the rocks they set fire to it.

7.2 Background and Reception

Mutiny on the Bounty was a huge box office hit on both sides of the Atlantic and won the 1935 Academy Award for best picture.[289] When the film opened at the Empire Leicester Square, on Boxing Day 1935, the theatre reported 'a complete turmoil at the box office and all house records broken'.[290] It was the most successful maritime film of the period which must in part be attributed to the high quality production values and the sensationalist approach as much as the subject. It was based on an existing fictional account of the voyage, the novel, *Mutiny on the Bounty,* by Charles Nordhoff and James Norman Hall. Despite its roots in fiction, however, some considerable attention was paid to historical detail: a replica of the *Bounty* was built and Charles Laughton ordered a duplicate of Bligh's uniform made in 1879 from the pattern still held by Gieves.[291]

The film was well received by the British critics who expressed particular admiration for its technical qualities. The *Times* praised, 'the vivid reconstruction of an

[289] Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain,* p. 80.
[290] 'Cinemas Turn Away Money: Houses Crowded Before the First Show', *Observer,* 29 December 1935.
[291] 'Laughton was Right', *Daily Mirror,* 15 September 1936. Now 'Gieves and Hawkes' the company holds records of uniforms made since its beginnings in 1771.

eighteenth century voyage, the continual and ingenious use of realistic detail...[292] The major criticism in the quality press was of the Tahiti scenes. C.A. Lejeune commented in the *Observer* that, 'I refuse to take those Tahiti scenes seriously,'[293] and the *Manchester Guardian* said:

> Then the Bounty arrives at Tahiti, and the film as well as the seamen become demoralised. The amours of Clark Gable and Franchot Tone with the granddaughters of the chief of the island- a benign old man with bobbed hair called Hiti-Hiti, who looks like a colonial servant gone native – are sign of the Old Adam in Hollywood. Palm trees, native dancers, the moon and close-ups – we have seen these all before. It is a relief to get back to Charles Laughton's magnificent acting, though there is all too little of it left.[294]

The reviewer evidently perceived the scenes as morally reprehensible, a useful comparator to the attitude of the Admiralty to romantic interludes in naval films as previously noted. The popular press concerned itself chiefly with the level of brutality in the film, for example R. J. Whitley commented in the *Daily Mirror,* 'I am a hardened filmgoer, but *Mutiny on the Bounty*... is the most grimly realistic study in brutality that I have ever seen; Charles Laughton's portrayal of the sadistic Captain Bligh being almost too overpowering,'[295] although he was also captivated by the film, claiming that it had held him 'spell bound'.[296]

7.3 Patriotism and *Mutiny on the Bounty*

The *Daily Mirror* questioned whether the mutiny was an appropriate episode of British naval history for the screen:

> ...I cannot help wishing that all the production genius had not been concentrated on such an unpleasant subject – Captain Bligh was certainly a cruel disciplinarian, but he was also an excellent seaman, and it is a pity so much footage is devoted to the pleasure he got from witnessing the pain he caused to be administered to others...Make no mistake *Mutiny on the Bounty* is a sensational piece of stage-craft, but unnecessary cruelty, not heroism at sea

[292] 'Mutiny on the Bounty', *Times,* 24 December 1935
[293] C.A. Lejeune, 'Films of the Week', *Observer,* 29 December 1935.
[294] 'Charles Laughton as Captain Bligh', *The Manchester Guardian,* 1 September the *Times* also criticised the film on the same basis; '*Mutiny on the Bounty'*, December 25, 1935.
[295] R.J. Whitley, 'Brutality on the High Seas in a Film', *Daily Mirror,* 24 December 1935.
[296] Ibid.

> is the keynote. In America the picture has been an amazing success, and there is no doubt that its stark realism will attract a wide public here. But whether this is an appropriate moment to screen a picture showing a decidedly unfortunate phase in British naval history is a matter of opinion.[297]

This was not, however, a prevalent feeling and both the *Times* and the *Daily Express* saw the film as suitably patriotic:

> Britain should go and see the film *Mutiny on the Bounty*. It tells a glorious chapter in the tale of Britain's rise to sea power. The voyage of Lieutenant Bligh across the Pacific in an open boat is one of the greatest triumphs of man's long struggle against the sea. The eighteenth century sailors were not plaster saints. Some were hard sinners. Mutiny on the Bounty unfolds a narrative of heroism, splendid seamanship - and black wickedness.[298]

This view was confirmed by some Mass Observation respondents, for example one regular cinema-goer commented: 'I still remember with a thrill that great sea drama *Mutiny on the Bounty*, real men, real acting, no stilted artificiality this, something that makes you proud of being an Englishman'.[299] The film received almost universal approval in the Mass Observation survey and was also mistakenly identified by some members of the public as a British production, as had been the case with *Lloyd's of London*.[300]

C. A. Lejeune regarded the film as even more patriotic than the British would make themselves, and as a gesture of admiration from Hollywood:

> Since this is the season of brotherhood and goodwill, I think we are justified in a fairly sentimental gesture of gratitude to America for making this British patriotic picture. It is possible that no English picture would be as jingoistic as *Mutiny on the Bounty* but it is certain that no English picture has ever been quite so generous. From first shot to last bar of recording it is a love-song to this island of sea-men, to their ships, to their stout heart, their discipline and their integrity, to the course they hold and the stars they follow...The Americans believe that the British Navy has always been a good darn navy. In the *Bounty* film they say so.[301]

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[297] Ibid.
[298] '*Mutiny on the Bounty*', *The Daily Express*, 24 December 1935
[299] 'Cinema-Going in Worktown, 1938', in Richards and Sheridan (eds), *Mass Observation at the Movies*, p. 63
[300] Ibid, p. 83
[301] C. A. Lejeune, 'Films of the Week', *The Times*, December 29, 1935

Mutiny on the Bounty, like *Lloyd's of London*, is one of the films that Glancy identifies as a Hollywood 'British' film.[302] The reception to the film was much more positive and unlike *Lloyd's of London* it did not offend the critics' sense of British history. The story was of course sensationalised and it is possible to point out a number of inaccuracies[303] but the film was based on a fictional account. It also reinforced some existing British interpretations of the story, for example that the mutineers' plight highlighted sailors' legitimate grievances, leading ultimately to reform, and that the mutiny was precipitated by Bligh's brutality.[304] These views were explicitly stated at the beginning of the film, which also underlined another popular view of the British navy as the 'policemen of the seas': '...this mutiny, famous in history and legend, helped bring about a new discipline, based upon mutual respect between officers and men by which Britain's sea power is maintained as security for all those who pass upon the seas'.

Sarah Moss suggests that the retelling of the mutiny in the 1790s shortly after the trial of the *Bounty* mutineers, and following the fleet mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, 'functioned both for those aboard and for those reading about them at home as microcosmic Englands where all power relations and conflicts were intensified'.[305] As this implies the central significance of the story is the power relationships between authority and oppression. Only the bare essentials of the mission, voyage and capture are necessary, and the story can therefore bear historical inexactitude and variation of characters in its retelling. This may in part explain why the mutiny has been retold several times on film[306] and remains in the public consciousness. It also offers a

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[302] Glancy, *When Hollywood Loved Britain*, p. 1, pp. 78-80.

[303] For example: Bligh was not a particularly brutal captain, was not on board the *Pandora*, or present at the trial of the mutineers and Byam is incorrectly referred as 'Ensign Byam'. There were also some letters pedantic letters to the *Times* regarding minor discrepancies in uniforms, for example see Taprell Dorling 'Letters to the Editor: Mutiny on the Bounty', *The Times*, 13 January 1936.

[304] See 'Relics at the Royal Naval Exhibition', *Times*, 22 May 1891. Byron's poem 1823 *The Island* presents Bligh as tyrannical, as did some accounts of the mutineers, in particular the manuscript of the boatswain's mate James Morrison, *The Journal of James Morrison, boatswain's mate of the Bounty, describing the Mutiny & Subsequent Misfortunes of the Mutineers together with an account of the Island of Tahiti* (London: Golden Cockerel Press, 1935) – printed from the manuscript in the Mitchell Library, New South Wales.

[305] Sarah Moss, 'Class War and the Albatross: The Politics of Ships as Social Space and the Rime of the Ancient Mariner', in Berhard Klein (ed.), *Fictions of the Sea: Critical Perspectives on the Ocean in British Literature* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 79.

[306] *In the Wake of the Bounty* (1933, AUS); *Mutiny on the Bounty*, (1962, US); *The Bounty* (1983).

striking contrast with screen depictions of Nelson, where the battles are as necessary as his persona because they describe the relationship of Britain with other powers, rather than internal conflicts. The alteration of the Battle of Trafalgar for *Lloyd's of London* was therefore unpalatable to British audiences, no matter how bright a light was shone on the Royal Navy.

As Glancy points out, the use of British talent, most notably the director, Frank Lloyd, and Charles Laughton in a lead role, also contributed to the success of the film in Britain.[307] There is, for example, a great deal more emphasis on Laughton in British reviews in comparison to Clark Gable's portrayal of Christian. Glancy goes on to argue that the casting of an American actor as Christian was significant as a counterpoint to Laughton as Bligh:

> … masterfully portrayed by Laughton as both a cruelly sadistic and tragic character, is clearly representative of the old England, in which rank, tradition and regulations take precedence above all else... Fletcher Christian though, is 'one man who would not endure tyranny' (as his friend Roger Byam tells the naval court). With his New World accent, his concern for the common man and his ultimate search for a new country, Gable / Christian appears to be as much a Yankee rebel as a naval mutineer... When Roger Byam is given the king's mercy, we also see that the most important of all British institutions is sound and compassionate. Thus, the film not only offers an American audience the opportunity to have its faith in the new world confirmed but also manages to celebrate British accomplishments and traditions.[308]

This undoubtedly contributed to the film's popularity on both sides of the Atlantic and perhaps is the one of the overriding impressions of the film. Some complexities deserve, however, to be noted. Bligh is, as he says, a 'self-made man' and that he likes to have a 'gentleman' below him. This moment is not dwelt upon or mentioned again, although his alienation is clear, but in terms of class he is below both Christian and Byam and therefore not solely representative of an old order. Like Drake as portrayed in *Drake of England*, Bligh has earned his position by the virtue of his seamanship. This question of class and merit goes back to the old argument between gentlemen and tarpaulins discussed in Chapter 1. In *Mutiny on the Bounty* the gentlemen are seen as the locus of appropriate leadership. Byam's credentials are

[307] Glancy, *When Holly wood Loved Britain*, p. 78.
[308] Ibid., pp. 78-9.

implied at the beginning of the film by mention of the fact that his family had 'followed the sea for seven generations, not one ever failed in his duty'. In addition Byam is able to get a reprieve through the intervention of his well connected friends rather than because he is actually innocent.

Byam's reinstatement does, as Glancy notes, reinforce the appropriate rule of the monarch, but it is also proof of the compassion within the Royal Navy as his return is so welcome to his superior officers. It is significant that amongst the officers assembled for the court martial is a Captain Nelson (if this is meant to be Horatio Nelson, as must be assumed, it is a fabrication). Byam appeals for 'just one man' to listen to his plea:

> I speak in their names and Fletcher Christian's name for all men at sea. These men don't ask for comfort. They don't ask for safety. If they could speak to you they'd say "Let us choose to do our duty willingly. Not the choice of a slave but that of free Englishmen."They ask only the freedom that England expects for every man. If one man amongst you believed that – one man. He could command the fleets of England. He could sweep the seas for England. If he called his men to duty not by flaying their backs but by lifting their hearts... That's all.

Therein is the style of the popular perception of Nelson's leadership and the 'proof' of Byam's assertion is confirmed to the audience by their knowledge of the subsequent victory at Trafalgar. The 'one man' was of course Nelson, and the Royal Navy was again supreme. The film therefore subscribed to a Whiggish sense of history that saw increasing progression towards a civilised society: the brutality of Bligh recognised as un-Christian (in more than one sense), thereby laying a path for the appropriate command of Nelson and the Royal Navy's authority to be the world's policemen.

8. The First World War on Film

British and American historic portrayals of the Royal Navy were never as concentrated as in the first third of the twentieth century,[309] and the moment of portrayal of the navy during the First World War was briefer still. Without a decisive

[309] In the late twentieth century and the beginning of the 21st British made productions, largely for television concentrated once more on the historic, but in very limited numbers as is discussed in the Epilogue.

sea battle, and an arguably anticipated second Trafalgar there was relatively little cultural manifestation of the navy during the First World War as land warfare became the dominant image. In the immediate aftermath there was a limited number of productions including a series of semi-documentary films of the major sea battles and a handful of fictional representations.[310] The aforementioned documentaries *The Battle of Jutland* (1921), *Zeebrugge* (1924), *The Battles of Coronel and Falkland Islands* (1927) which were all made with Admiralty co-operation attracted much attention at the time of their releases, in addition to *Tell England* (1931, about the Gallipoli campaign) for which the Admiralty was a producer. *Jutland* was given an unusual amount of coverage during the production period largely because it was hoped that the film would make a new contribution to history. The film was made as an educational reconstruction under the auspices of Major General Sir George Aston, a lecturer on naval and military affairs at the University of London who had spent two years working on diagrams to understand the course of the battle. The film gave a bird's eye view using models which it was claimed by the producers would:

> not only decide once and for all the question with whom rest the laurels of the Battle of Jutland, but that it will also give valuable information to help a judgement to be formed on the vexed question of the use of a battleship The picture, it is hoped, will furnish a considerable contribution to history as well as a striking entertainment which may help to open up a new and important field for the moving picture.[311]

Similarly when the film came out the *Manchester Guardian* suggested that 'posterity will be very grateful' and that there should be a room in the British Museum for just such productions. In fifty years time it was predicted that the film would be of 'purely historical interest' but 1921 was 'the wrong time for it' as it was tinged with too much sadness.[312] The later documentaries, which included more constructed scenes, than *Jutland* all received more enthusiastic critical responses, although the educational impulse, the concern with historical accuracy and the documentary approach remained the same.

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[310] Examples include *Q-Ships* (1928); *Heart of Oak* (1933); *Freedom of the Seas* (1934); *Shipmates O'Mine* (1936); *The Spy in Black* (1939).
[311] 'A Jutland Film', *Times,* 2 March, 1921.
[312] 'Jutland on the Film', *Manchester Guardian,* 8 September, 1921.

The Zeebrugge reconstruction was put together with material from Commander K. M. Bruce which was then checked by officers who took part in the engagement. It also received considerable assistance from the Admiralty and the Belgian Government.[313] The *Times* commented: 'Though strictly an educational production, it is full of interest from start to end, and the countless thrills it contains put to shame most of the artificial devices of the conventional American film.'[314]. Of the four it was probably *The Battles of Coronel and Falkland Islands* that was the most successful, warranting a second release with sound in 1932. It was made deliberately as 'a national film'[315] with support from the Federation of British Industries and the Navy League as well as the Admiralty. The *Manchester Guardian* considered it 'without question the best motion picture that a British director has ever made.'[316]

The response to these films underlined the concerns of the critics of the quality press throughout the period. First that Britain was best suited to represent its own history, second that education through film was a desirable aim and third an increasingly aesthetic preference for the documentary approach. In spite of the hopes that these films would serve as long-term educational tools, and as widely accessible historical documents, however, this was not to be.

8.1 *Forever England*[317] (1935)

Forever England was the first of two film adaptations of C.S. Forester's novel *Brown on Resolution* published in 1929. The second was *Single-Handed*[318] an American production with British director Roy Boulting (1953). It was one of the few fictional naval films set during the First World War although this was updated to the Second World War for the 1953 adaptation. The film is also an example of a trend that became more prominent during the Second World War in its serious portrayal of working-class characters.

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313 'The Film World', *Times*, 13 October, 1924.
314 'Film of Zeebrugge', *Times,* 17 October, 1924.
315 'Admiralty Help for New Film', *Manchester Guardian,* 20 October, 1926.
316 'A British Film: The Battles of Coronel and the Falkland Islands', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 September, 1927.
317 Alternative UK title: *Brown on Resolution*, US titles: *Torpedo Raider, Born for Glory*.
318 Alternative titles: *Sailor of the King, Able Seaman Brown, Sailor of the Sea, Brown on Resolution.*

8.1.1 Synopsis

Forever England begins with the meeting of a young naval officer, Lieutenant Summerville, and Elizabeth Bentley, a greengrocer's daughter, at the Naval Exhibition at Crystal Palace in 1853. They have a passionate affair while he is on leave. He wants to marry her, but wait until he is promoted. She does not want to affect his naval career and she refuses marriage on the grounds of their class difference. As a token his love he gives her his great-grandfather's pocket-watch that was presented to him by Nelson in 1803.

The next scene shows Albert Brown as a cadet being presented with a boxing prize by Summerville, now a captain, at a naval training school. A montage sequence shows documentary footage of cadets training and cuts to show Albert as an adult. Before Albert is posted to his first ship, *Rutland*, he visits his mother with his messmate Ginger. Through conversation with his mother it is obvious that it is her enthusiasm for the navy that has propelled him to a life at sea. Albert questions her about the identity of his father but she avoids the issue and gives him the pocket-watch, indicating to the audience that he is Summerville's illegitimate son.

Albert's ship is in port at Valparaiso with the German vessel *Ziethen*. The two crews have a cordial relationship; the officers are shown drinking together, and Albert sets up a boxing match with Max, one of the German sailors. While they are all aboard *Rutland* a German sailor brings the message to his Captain that Britain and Germany are at war.

At sea the *Rutland* chases down *Ziethen*, although the German vessel is superior in armament. *Rutland* is sunk in the battle, with Albert and Ginger having affected the only hit on the enemy ship. They are also the only two survivors and are taken aboard *Ziethen* to the sick bay, where Max attends them. He tells them the crew have to make repairs to the damaged panel quickly before the arrival of a British ship they know to be following. The ship stops by the island of Resolution and Albert is determined to delay *Ziethen* to give the British ship time to catch up. Ginger covers for him and he escapes the ship taking a rifle with him. High up on the rocky island he shoots at the sailors making repairs, he hesitates as the first of them is Max but he

does kill him. A landing party is sent to hunt Albert down and although they fail to find him he is fatally wounded by a shot. He stays alive long enough to see the *Ziethen* destroyed by HMS *Leopard*, which is captained by his father. From the German captain Summerville learns of Brown's action and orders a search for him. He is found dead, but with him is the pocket-watch, which is handed to Summerville. Of course he recognises it, and sees a picture of Elizabeth inside. The final shots of the film show a cross marking Albert's grave on the island and his face which fades to images of the fleet at sea.

8.1.2 Background and Reception

The title was deliberately changed from *Brown on Resolution* to *Forever England* by the producers, against the wishes of the director who asked, 'Who'd want to go and see a patriotic film?'[319] He did, however concede that 'in some ways the new patriotic title proved an advantage: it certainly pleased the Navy, who had been uncommonly cooperative during production...'[320] As Richards notes, although there had been a tradition of naval dramas, service films took on a new urgency from 1935 in response to German rearmament.[321] He comments that: 'The critic of *Kine Weekly* saw this film [*Drake of England*] along with *Forever England* as a deliberate boost to Britain's naval readiness as part of a patriotic counterblast to German propaganda films'.[322]

There is scant evidence of audience reactions to the film other than it was the twenty-fourth most popular British film of the year.[323] Reviews of the film were a little mixed with some criticism over the simplicity of the story,[324] and the quantity of dialogue in German.[325] All agreed that the naval battle scenes, which had enjoyed considerable

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[319] Quoted in Brown (ed.), *Walter Forde*, p. 35.
[320] Ibid.
[321] Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, p. 292.
[322] Ibid, p. 288.
[323] Taken from statistics in John Sedgwick, *Popular Film Going in 1930s Britain: A Choice of Pleasures* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000), pp. 269-272.
[324] British Film Institute Library Microfilm: Forever England.
[325] 'Forever England', *Observer*, May 19, 1935.

cooperation from the Admiralty with the use of four warships, were of a high standard.[326]

Despite the title the film was restrained in patriotic fervour as noted in the *Monthly Film Bulletin* review:

> The film carefully avoids militarism and jingoism and is scrupulously fair to the qualities of the German Navy and its men, and concentrates on the courage of Albert Brown doing a job which he has been taught is expected of a sailor in time of war. In so doing, it pays a quiet and honest tribute to the navy...[327]

The understatement of the film was not universally appreciated for two reasons. First, the review in *Kinematograph Weekly* felt that the film would have benefitted from being more openly patriotic: 'Patriotism, strangely enough, does not play a predominant part in the treatment; it is there, but generally subservient to personal sentiment. A little more flagwagging would have done no harm'.[328] Second, the *Monthly Film Bulletin* reviewer felt that the quiet nature of the film misrepresented its context and that: '...in refraining from any statement of the cause of war and emphasising the comradeship between British and German sailors it tends to reduce them to puppets governed by forces outside themselves'.[329]

This was the merest hint at the popular ideas, which truly gained momentum in the 1960s, of troops as cannon fodder, following incompetent leaders.[330] They were ideas that had already started to surface, notably in *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930, US). The Royal Navy barely registers as a factor in these ideas and continued to be represented in an almost universal positive light. Despite its First World War setting it was barely a reference point in *Forever England*: although the nature of the naval action was reminiscent of skirmishes in the Battles of Coronel and the Falkland Islands. The story was, however, easily transposed to the Second World War for the second adaptation. The line of history is drawn back to Nelson rather than to the specific circumstances of the First World War. This is essentially achieved by

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[326] See *The Observer*, 19 May 1935, *Times*, 20 May 1935.
[327] 'Brown on Resolution', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 2/16 May (1935), p.51.
[328] 'Forever England', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 May 1935.
[329] 'Brown on Resolution', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 2/16 (1935), p.51.
[330] See Dan Todman, *The Great War: Myth and Memory* (London: Hambledon and London, 2005), particularly pp. 73-152.

familial tie in the form of Summerville's pocket-watch. To one critic who recognised this as a major theme of the film, Brown's actions were interpreted as 'Breed will tell'.[331]

Familial tie was already established as a common way to express the longevity of British naval success and continuity on screen.[332] Even though Brown is unaware of it he does of course also come from a long line of naval officers. His mother stands in for his father's absence in propelling him towards the navy, sacrificing her son as she has her own happiness in deference of Summerville's career. This is an extreme example of the subsidiary role often played by women in the naval scenario as significant only in their support of their combatant men, which is discussed further in the case study of *In Which We Serve*. Beyond the family unit the importance of naval tradition is emphasised throughout the film. The traditions of the Royal Navy are made clear from the beginning. The Royal Family, on the way to the Naval Exhibition, are heralded through crowd lined streets. When Elizabeth and Summerville leave in the same cab they pass Nelson's Column, giving her the chance to express her admiration for the navy which leads Summerville to reveal his family connections. As Rayner comments when Summerville is next seen at the training school as a captain, he has grown a beard and bears a strong resemblance George V.[333] He concludes that; 'The implications of this nostalgic perspective are that, as a national surrogate, the Navy is a reassuringly conservative institution, and that naval service continues to demand and rely upon Victorian values and Nelsonian virtues'.[334] This study suggests that the construction of maritime history in the Victorian era in fact made Victorian and Nelsonian values one and the same thing in the Edwardian period. In these respects *Forever England* was typical of the representation of the navy before the Second World War, in foreshadowing the past success of the sailing navy alongside that of the twentieth century.

[331] 'Forever England', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 23 May 1935.
[332] Examples include *The Luck of the Navy* (1927) and *The Man at The Gate* (1941).
[333] Ibid., p. 23.
[334] Ibid., p. 21.

What marked out *Forever England* both from naval film and 1930s cinema in general,[335] was that the protagonist was a serious depiction of a working-class character as a hero. The 'common man as hero' has been seen as a development in Second World War film,[336] with working class men having previously largely associated with comedy scenarios.[337] Early portrayals of the ordinary sailor as hero were generally short films that attested to the good character of the sailor onshore, rather than scenarios where he was seen in his professional capacity.[338] Similarly, Brown is seen to act without direction from an officer, a fact that is sometimes highlighted in discussions of the later *San Demetrio London* as a departure from the usual cinematic scenarios.[339] In fact, *Forever England* demonstrates that even before the Second World War, the cinematic working class hero was becoming a more rounded figure than a simple comic turn. Instead he began to represent ideals of British character which had previously been more commonly embodied in the officer classes. As Richards notes, Able Seaman Brown became John Mills' 'first definitive expression of British decency'.[340]

Rayner argues that the film is atypical in comparison to most naval representations did not measure up against the: 'suggested characteristics, in relation to the depiction of history, the questioning of authority, the characterisation of shipboard communities, or contest with the sea itself'.[341]This is essentially because he is comparing it to characteristics found in the films of the second half of the Second World War and beyond, and *Forever England* begins his survey. The characteristics that he identifies require re-evaluation if one takes in to account the productions made prior to 1939. For its time period *Forever England* was not atypical. It focussed on a single hero, in common with the structure of naval espionage plots, and the historical films featuring Drake and Nelson. Like many previous naval scenarios it incorporated elements of documentary footage, for example in the scenes of the naval

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[335] Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p.131.
[336] Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men: The Representation of Nationality in Popular British Cinema* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001), p. 13.
[337] Ibid, p. 19.
[338] There were also films that showed the sailor as a rogue or comedic figure which are discussed in Chapter 5.
[339] Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 188.
[340] Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 131.
[341] Rayner, *The Naval War Film*, p. 26.

training school. It emphasised history through the familial tie of generations of naval officers and visually referenced the Royal Family.

It is true that *Forever England* did not confront Rayner's suggested characteristics of the questioning of authority or contest with the sea. One does not need, however, to look far to find these elsewhere in pre-1939 film. *Mutiny on the Bounty* is a clear exploration of authority. In addition the sea as an enemy to be contested was implicit in virtually every maritime scenario in cinematic or literary incarnation.[342] A storm or a feat of navigation (again seen in *Mutiny on the Bounty* for example) was a common narrative device used in explicit demonstration of the prowess of British sailors in conquering the sea itself: a key trope in the projection of British supremacy at sea. Overall *Forever England* had much in common with pre-war representations of the Royal Navy on screen. In understatement and sentiment as well as in the inclusion of a well rounded working class character however it foreshadowed representations of the navy in Second World War cinema.

9. Conclusions

The films in the case studies from the latter end of the period drew from previous imagery and cultural manifestations of their central subjects. They demonstrated a direct connection between the Victorian historians' construction of the 'island story' and the presentation of the maritime sphere on film. This is seen in a reiterated chronology with the Elizabethan era as a starting point in which Royal Naval figures play a key role. Foreign productions were only considered successful in the eyes of the critics if they adhered to this configuration of the past. There was an impulse to protect the British film industry from foreign competition by government intervention and consensus amongst critics to protect a particular version of British history. The navy was a key part of both aims and the Admiralty paid a more active part than has previously been noted during this period.

[342] It has been identified as a characteristic of the 1950s war film (discussed in Chapter 6) because representation of enemy in the form of another nation is often absent.

In fictional film the realities or concerns of the navy were secondary to the promotion of an idea of an ideal British character. The central concerns of these films were almost always gentlemanly behaviour and appropriate command. Their promotion to children was to engender the good citizenship which the naval officer had come to represent as shown in Colville's work. Class was almost always an underlying issue, although film started to challenge the reality of Colville's findings that it was only the upper and middle classes that could be seen to have the character of a gentleman. Drake overcame his humble beginnings to show himself as the true hero above the high born Doughty brothers and Jonathan Blake became as much a hero as Nelson. Able Seaman Brown, illegitimate and brought up as working-class proves to be more worthy than his naval officer father.

Many of the aspects of cinematic representation of the navy that have been identified as occurring during the latter half of the Second World War were in fact already discernable in films made before 1939. In particular the naval film had started to embrace a wider section of society than 1920s films such as *The Luck of the Navy.* The documentary approach was seen to be gaining critical approval and this aspect is explored further in the next chapter where the maritime industries are shown to be filmed almost exclusively through the documentary lens**.** The view of the Royal Navy remained conservative, but to understand the subtle shifts that took place during the Second World War, as well as the continuities that endured, it is necessary to understand what went before.

In spite of the fact the overwhelming majority of naval film concentrated on the contemporary navy it was viewed through the prism of history and tradition. As Harper notes '...from the beginning, the cinema's function in the presentation of a national history and culture was of paramount importance'.[343] Despite – or more likely because – of these perceived threats to the established order, one of the things that stand out over this period is the longevity of one particular version of national identity in respect of maritime history. The portrayal of the maritime industries was largely excluded from this picture, as they had been from the Victorian view of

[343] Sue Harper, *Picturing the Past: The Rise and Fall of the British Costume Film* (London: BFI, 1994) p. 8.

history. Their development followed a different path, which it is now necessary to consider.

Chapter 3: This is the story of a Ship

1. Introduction

The central concern of this chapter is the examination of cinematic representations of the shipbuilding industry, although it also draws from films that use non-naval maritime activity as their main theme. It traces the emergence of the fictional shipyard feature through the documentary movement and argues that a particular aesthetic and socialist slant came to dominate the genre over the first half of the twentieth century. It suggests that although shipbuilding films were often shot on location using regional actors they were not primarily concerned with regional identities. Rather they tended to integrate the regional industries' stories into the wider narrative of Britain's history with the sea particularly through the use of traditional naval rhetoric.

This chapter begins by giving an overview of the representation of maritime industries on film before using shipbuilding as a case study. As it makes clear, the ship launch was one of the most obvious ways by which the public was made aware of shipbuilding. The first case study the *Red Ensign* (1934) is preceded by an overview of fictional shipbuilding films made before the 1930s. The case study for *The Shipbuilders* (1943) is prefaced with a consideration of wartime productions centred on shipbuilding, including the musical comedy *Shipyard Sally* (1939) and the MoI short propaganda films. The final case study centres on *Floodtide* (1949), which was the last British fictional film on shipbuilding made in the twentieth century and briefly considers later documentary and television productions.

2. Overview of Maritime Industries on Film

Only a small body of fictional films depict Britain's maritime industries. They focus on shipbuilding and fishing and rely on contemporary settings. They have attracted some limited critical comment in the context of film history in general, in relation to

individual directors or the documentary movement, but are nowhere discussed as a body of films or in relation to the maritime sphere.[344]

The maritime industries were largely unexplored in fictional film before the 1930s,[345] but they had been a prominent part of actuality presentations and documentary from the beginning of the film industry. Other than ship launches, the most common subjects featured were trawler fishing and passenger liners.[346] Mitchell and Kenyon,[347] who filmed vast numbers of short actuality films between 1900 and 1911, often selected maritime subjects as a component of their work. The films were generally commissioned by travelling showmen, heavily focussed on the industrial north and tended to be shown in the area in which they were filmed for local entertainment, rather than for national distribution. There is footage, for example, of paddle steamers leaving Liverpool, of workers leaving shipbuilding yards and dockyards, and of Cunard vessels (also in Liverpool).[348]

Two decades later, these subjects also proved a rich ground for the documentary movement.[349] John Grierson returned to maritime workers throughout his career after his first film *Drifters* (1929) about the North Sea herring fleet.[350] Paul Rotha, another documentarist and lifelong socialist, showed a similar interest in the subject with productions such as *Rising Tide* (1934), about the building of Southampton docks and

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[344] Martin Bellamy mentions most of shipbuilding feature films in his article 'Shipbuilding and Cultural Identity on Clydeside', *Journal for Maritime Research*, January 2006, (unpaginated) www.jmr.nmm.ac.uk/server/show/ConjmrArticle.210 [accessed 16 March 2010], but their content is not discussed.

[345] The exception was fishing but these were mostly short romantic dramas rather than scenarios that actively explored the industry itself.

[346] See Appendix 2.

[347] The rediscovered films of Mitchell and Kenyon in 2005 had a great impact on the perception and study of early cinema. A BBC series (*The Lost World of Mitchell and Kenyon*, 2005) in collaboration with the British Film Institute introduced a wide audience to the collection and consequently had an influence over 21st century perceptions of Edwardian Britain.

[348] *A Trip to North Wales on the St Elvies* (1902); *Employees Leaving Vickers and Maxim's* (1901); *Workforce of Scott and Co. Shipyard* (1901); *Employees leaving Alexander Docks* (1901)*; Cunard Steamer Lucania* (1901); *Cunard Vessel at Liverpool* (1901).

[349] John Grierson instigated the British documentary film movement whilst working for the Empire Marketing Board in the early 1930s and in 1934 he transferred to the GPO. Initially he adopted a modernist approach to filmmaking, using impressionist techniques and later a more journalistic style.

[350] For example: as director, *Drifters* (1929); *Granton Trawler* (1934); *Port of London* (1930, unfinished); as producer: *Cable Ship* (1933); *Cargo from Jamaica* (1933); *Liner Cruising South* (1933); *The Saving of Bill Blewitt* (1936); As writer: *Seawards the Great Ships* (1960).

their relevance to the nation's economy.[351] Rotha's *Shipyard* (1935), documenting the construction of a ship in Barrow-in-Furness, used a poetic Soviet socialist style realism to portray the workers. With the sound of the yard punctuating the film, it showed what became the most familiar images of shipbuilding on screen: workers streaming into the yards, the strong worker hammering rivets, blinding shots of molten steel, and shots of the ship taken from below to emphasise their size. This aesthetic became a tenet of the portrayal of the shipyard in fictional film**.** Grierson, however, felt the aesthetic principles were secondary to the sociological, educational and democratic origins of the documentary film.[352] While the aesthetic and socialist leanings were a new direction in film, under the auspices of the Empire Marketing Board these films were required to represent a positive image of industrial Britain. Taylor argues that they were part of a drive towards 'an educated and enlightened democracy'. This was a response to anxiety amongst the ruling classes that the perceived ignorance of the new mass electorate could result in a widespread brand of socialism that was damaging to British democracy. These films were part of a wider social campaign alongside the development of adult learning and the expansion of public libraries during the 1930s.[353]

As will be seen, all the fictional features used documentary film, followed similar ideals and employed either local actors or genuine workers to portray the maritime industries. In the first third of the century they were rare examples of films that used regional accents and at least appeared to deal with local identities. It is apparent, therefore, that as the only significant pre-existing representations of maritime industries were documentary films that this approach influenced the fictional treatment of shipbuilding.

[351] See also, Rotha as director: *Ship* (1934); *Face of Britain: Great Cargoes* (1935); *Face of Britain: Shipyard* (1935). As producer: *The Way to the Sea* (1936).
[352] John Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism: British Cinema 1956-1963* (London: BFI Publishing), p. 69.
[353] Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, p. 91.

3. Ship Launches

Although the documentary movement won critical approval, these films were relatively rare and not necessarily widely distributed. Instead, the most prominent indication of maritime industries on film was the ship launch. As a repeated and familiar feature of newsreel reporting, this was probably the element of maritime industry with the highest public profile.

The naval ship launch was well established as a public spectacle before the advent of film. By the middle of the eighteenth century they started to become major events with members of the royal family sometimes in attendance.[354] Lincoln notes that by the beginning of the nineteenth century the ship launch was used to patriotic ends; in particular in the promotion of a united country.[355] During the reign of Queen Victoria, as naval matters came to the forefront, the launch became increasingly institutionalised. Women had been known to launch vessels from the beginning of the nineteenth century, but this became the norm.[356] This was reinforced by Queen Victoria, not only as a female monarch, but also as the first to actually launch a naval vessel herself, rather than simply provide a Royal presence as had been the case in the past.[357] Designated as a state occasion, the launch of naval vessels also began to incorporate a church service[358] and the national anthem.[359] It was another example of a union of state, church and Royal Navy.

The history of the launch of merchant vessels has not been investigated,[360] but although they were not state occasions many similar practices were observed. Here too it became the norm, for example, for women to launch the vessel; for a bottle of champagne to be broken over the bow and for prayers to be said for the future safety

[354] Margarette Lincoln, 'Naval Ship Launches as Public Spectacle 1773-1854', *Mariner's Mirror*, 83/4 (1997), pp. 466-7.
[355] Ibid, p. 470.
[356] Ibid., pp. 470-471.
[357] Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, p. 33.
[358] Technically this was a re-introduction as before the Reformation there would have been a form of Catholic blessing, then launches remained secular affairs until the Victorian period.
[359] Silvia Rodgers, 'Feminine Power at Sea', *Royal Anthropological Institute News*, 64 (1984), p. 2.
[360] There is anthology of first-hand and literary accounts of twentieth century launches from Glasgow in Martin Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2001), pp. 78-96.

and prosperity of the ship. Visually, merchant launches were virtually indistinguishable from the naval launch. As Bellamy states, launches were always an important event for the yard, which every worker would come out to watch, often along with local townsfolk. Not all merchant vessels were, however, launched with a ceremony.[361] Famously, in the same way as other White Star liners launched from Belfast, *Titanic* was not christened, and in popular mythology this has sometimes been cited as a reason for her ill-fortune.

Newspaper articles indicate that some launches were attended by thousands, but they gained an even greater audience as they immediately drew the cameraman. Between 1897 and 1919, commercial companies made at least 50 films of launches.[362] These films were popular with distributors, especially those which featured ships-of-war. [363] Ship launches became a staple of the newsreel with companies such as Gaumont Graphic and British Pathe producing at least 196 films of merchant and naval launches before the outbreak of the Second World War with a further 50 between 1945 and 1960.[364] Of these 167 were of launches between the wars intensifying in numbers towards the end of the period. Many of the films were concerned with the launch of ships that demonstrated technological breakthroughs in being, for example, the largest or fastest of their type. This interwar concentration on launches was part of a wider interest in both the shipbuilding industry and technology in general.

There were a number of factors which heightened the profile of shipbuilding in public consciousness during this period. First the Depression saw a quarter of shipyard workers unemployed when Britain's market share in shipbuilding had already dropped from around 60% before the First World War to 40%.[365]The Depression reduced the capacity of the industry which became a concern as rearmament became necessary in the build up to war. All this was the subject of constant press commentary in addition to the internal problems of the industry. Tension between the unions and yard owners led to strike action throughout the period which provoked

[361] Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*, p. 78.
[362] See Appendix 3.
[363] Charles Urban quoted in Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, p .66.
[364] More than one company often filmed the same vessel but this figure refers to individual ships filmed. There are very few newsreels of launches during the two world wars when they were censored.
[365] Ian Friel, *Maritime History of Britain and Ireland c.400-2001* (London: The British Museum Press, 2003), pp. 223 and 271.

particular fears of uprisings after revolution in Russia in 1917 and fears of Communist infiltration into the unions as the Second World War approached.

Second, in an increasingly competitive world market there were fears of national decline and a conscious effort to promote British industries in general.[366] This was indicated for example by the establishment of the Empire Marketing Board in 1926. This board was particularly important in terms of the projection of the maritime industries on screen in being headed by Stephen Tallents as well the starting point for Grierson's documentary work. At the same point there was a number of high profile, large scale exhibitions which heavily promoted the maritime industries (which were also the subject of extensive newsreel coverage). For example the annual British Industries Fair, instigated before the war to promote British made products and skills with exhibitions at the Victoria and Albert Museum, was greatly expanded. Between 1921 and 1930 it grew under the Board of Trade to encompass three exhibition spaces: two in London and one in Birmingham. Most notable was the British Empire Exhibition held at Wembley in 1924-1925 designed to promote the Empire's resources in raw materials and industrial potential. A naval link was made at the opening of the exhibition on St George's Day with an address by the Navy League recalling the fifth anniversary of the Zeebrugge raid during the First World War.[367]It attracted more than twenty million visitors and covered an area of over 216 acres with all the countries of the Empire represented.[368] Similarly the 1938 Empire Exhibition in Glasgow attracted approximately twelve million visitors. Once again these national projections seen in ship launches and exhibitions were heavily patronised by the Royal Family and frequently captured on film. In the light of the Russian Revolution George V and Queen Mary made a deliberate effort to ally themselves with 'the

[366] As in the case of the Royal Navy, despite some decline, in comparison to the period after 1945 the interwar years were in fact a time of sustained strength for the shipbuilding industry. See for example, David Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine: Weapons, Resources and Experts in the Second World War* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), p. 25.

[367]' St. George's Day Lessons', *Times* 23 April 1924.

[368] The British Engineers' Associated organised the section on Shipbuilding, Marine, Mechanical and General Engineering. In addition the exhibition included a pageant on the history of the Empire (with Louis N. Parker who wrote the previously discussed Drake play, as one of the organisers); a large scale model of Belfast Harbour with a modern ocean liner on the slips to be launched daily; a complete representation of the evolution of the British fighting ship in models and the central galleries of the Government Pavilion looked down on a 40ft by 20ft relief map of the world on which miniature ships moved in water around the main trade routes of the Empire. See 'The Pageant of Empire', *Times* 8 January, 1924; 'Miniature Launch', *Times*, 15 December, 1923 and 'British Empire Exhibition', *Times* 16 January 1924.

people' by visiting industrial cities and meeting workers: invariably followed by a camera.

The sustained media interest in the launching of new vessels was not surprising, considering the combined factors of a troubled shipbuilding industry in the Depression, the rise of the great liners, rearmament concerns and a deliberate promotion of British industries in the lead up to the Second World War. Arguably, the projection of the ship launch symbolised a continuing idea of prosperity and of naval and merchant dominance. They underlined Britain's perception of herself as a maritime nation[369] and promoted her abroad as being at the forefront of cutting edge technology. Launches provided a location for popular participation which could be presented, as in the eighteenth century, as the fulfilment of the idea of a united Britain. An impressive ship surrounded by elaborate ceremonials on launch day emphasised pride and reassurance over industrial, political, economic or international unease.

Gaumont's caption for the launch of the *Aquitania* in 1914 made clear the European competition in the production of liners as well as naval ships: 'The Giant Cunarder: The pride of Britain and America and the Envy of the Huns'.[370] International rivalry for the Blue Riband (awarded for the fastest transatlantic crossing) intensified competition to build ever bigger and faster liners throughout the interwar period. Inevitably news of the Blue Riband was a regular subject of the newsreels both in reporting winners and in speculation.[371] The Blue Riband underlined the significance of the liners as symbols of national pride, creativity and international prestige.[372] This should be seen in the wider context of 'techno-nationalism'. As Edgerton points out the intellectuals in nearly every nation were nationalistic about science and technology, in terms of propaganda, claiming inventions and forwarding the notion that their country was particularly suited to the modern age, although the idea of

[369] See also the discussion in Rüger, *The Great Naval Game*, especially pp. 169-171.
[370] Gaumont Graphic No 330.
[371] For example as the *Queen Mary* was nearing completion in 1935 British Pathe headlined a reel 'Blue Riband of the Atlantic: *Queen Mary* will soon be in competition with *Normandie.*'
[372] See Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity*, pp. 228 and 330.

techno-nationalism has most often been applied to Germany in the inter-war period.[373] Rieger concludes on Anglo-German rivalry that:

> Numerous celebrations that rallied the population around ships, airships and aeroplanes provided points where support was crystallized and further enhanced technology's role as an indicator of each country's economic, political and military power before and after the First World War.[374]

During the Second World War films of the naval launch virtually disappeared due to censorship restrictions. The naming of vessels, however, was still important and used to foster allegiances in the same way as the Admiralty had given Scottish, Welsh and Irish names to ships at the beginning of the century. As Edgerton points out the word *Empire* was common to over 1,300 merchant ships built or acquired by Britain during the war. The naming of *Empire Liberty* in 1941, he suggests 'expressed what they were fighting for, Empire and liberty.'[375]

While Empire may also have been a key concept in the promotion of shipping before the war and frequently represented in newsreel through naval tours and Royal visits it was to play almost no part in the fictional representations of shipbuilding or the MoI shorts to which this chapter now turns. In addition, as will be seen one of the key preoccupations within the shipbuilding films was the issue of class. As found in the case of the naval film the issues confronted were often those of internal social order.

4. Fictional Film

Films of launches focussed on the ship as artefact, and the effect of this attraction was to highlight the finished product rather than the practice of shipbuilding and the workforce. Bellamy notes that there was a similar pattern in paintings prior to the First World War which showed the ship at launching. During the war, however, the yards were showcased for propaganda purposes through official war photographs published in magazines and newspapers.[376] These prioritised the workers rather than

[373] David Edgerton, 'The Contradictions of Techno Nationalism and Techno Globalism: A Historical Perspective', *New Global Studies* 1/1 (2007), p.1.
[374] Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity*, p. 273.
[375] Edgerton, *Britain's War Machine*, p. 81.
[376] The need for ships during wartime led to an expansion of the industry and consequent recruitment. *Lord Pirrie's Appeal to Shipyard Workers* (1918) was a cartoon propaganda film aimed at attracting unskilled workers to the trade. An arm (labelled 'shipyard worker') is seen to strangle the Kaiser with

the ships.[377] The Admiralty Shipyard Labour Department was particularly concerned with images showing the kind of work that could be undertaken by women in the yards so that men could be released for service; although this was never a major subject on film.[378] A very limited number of films made during the naval arms race gave an idea of the practice of shipbuilding behind the launch such as SS *Olympic* (1910) and *A Dreadnought in the Making* (1911). A distinct shift towards a greater focus on the workforce, however, occurred with the onset of the documentary movement films and with the cluster of shipbuilding films made around the Second World War.

The lives of shipyard workers, particularly those from Glasgow, began to be explored in novels and plays following the heightened profile of shipyards after the First World War and the 1919 general strike. The action called largely by the shipbuilding unions, as Bellamy notes, gave rise to the legend of 'Red Clydeside,' and the workers tended to be glamorized in literary incarnations.[379] It has only been possible to identify two fictional films involving shipyards from the early twentieth century: *Milestones* (Thomas Bentley, 1916)[380] and *The Three Passions* (Rex Ingram, 1928).

Milestones dealt with three generations of shipyard owners from 1860-1912 and focussed on family relationships and the advance of technology, showing for example Queen Victoria at the launch of the first ironclad vessel.[381] The nature of the story can be linked to Rieger's suggestion that 'Britain's embrace of technology for national reasons...reveals a conservative notion of modernity predicated on a desire for continuity.'[382] This film used the family link as one of continuity, emphasising the idea of a 'race' with a proclivity for technological change: another form of techno-nationalism that 'claims that this country or that country is best fitted for a technological age.'[383]*The Three Passions* also focussed on the shipyard owners in a

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the caption 'this is the shipyard grip'. Britannia, giving the message that 'Britons never will be slaves' and it is stressed that ships are needed to both counter U-boats and bring food to Britain.

[377] Bellamy, 'Shipbuilding and Cultural Identity on Clydeside', (unpaginated).

[378] Jane Carmichael, *First World War Photographers* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 114.

[379] Bellamy 'Shipbuilding and Cultural Identity on Clydeside', (unpaginated).

[380] This is a lost film based on a successful West End play by Arnold Bennett and Edward Knoblauch.

[381] See Rachel Low, *The History of the British Film, Vol.2 1914-18* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1948), p. 184.

[382] Rieger, *Technology and the Culture of Modernity*, p. 274.

[383] Edgerton, 'Techno Nationalism and Techno Globalism', p. 3.

melodramatic story. Although it centred on the relationship between the owner's son and his fiancée, it was a precursor to the *Red Ensign* in the paternalistic attitudes displayed towards the workers. It contained some muted references to strike action, although its sympathetic treatment of strikers was in contrast to a negative portrayal of ordinary seamen. The shots of the yard bore some semblance of documentary style, but, in its repetitive imaging of working machinery, showed more sign of being influenced by the German expressionism of *Metropolis* (1927). Thereafter all fictional shipbuilding films adopted a documentary approach to the subject alongside the height of the documentary movement.

4.1 *Red Ensign* (1934)

The first major treatment of shipbuilding in fictional film was Michael Powell's *Red Ensign.* Two things stand out about the film: it dealt with industrial relations and it emphasised the importance and tradition of merchant shipping, as opposed to naval prowess, to the nation as a whole.

4.1.1 Synopsis

The film is set in a shipyard in Glasgow in the midst of the Depression. Enterprising shipbuilder Michael Barr has a design for a new cargo vessel, which he believes will revitalise Britain's ailing shipping industry. The company's board are against investing, but in order to secure their support he convinces them that a new government shipping Bill is going through that will ensure their success. In fact Barr already knows the Bill has been defeated. He rejects a bid from a rival shipping magnate, Manning, on the grounds that he uses flags of convenience (a disadvantage to the British shipping industry) and exploits his workers. Barr manages to win over the board, who are in favour of the sale, with the help of June Mackinnon, a trustee and the fiancée of the chairman of the board, Lord Dean. When his deception over the government Bill is discovered, all withdraw their support. Barr attempts to carry on using his own money, but is unable to get a loan. He still resists Manning's offer, and there is not enough left to pay the workers. He averts strike action through a stirring, patriotic speech to the workforce convincing them to work for nothing in the short term. June is a converted back to Barr's cause when she hears his words and

they are drawn together romantically. To release her capital, however, she requires the consent of Lord Dean.

Manning, through a former worker now employed by Barr, sabotages the partially built ship by setting off explosives in the hull. Barr discovers the perpetrator of the explosion through a journalist. Lord Dean refuses to release June's money and Barr forges his signature on the documents so that he can proceed. Manning blackmails Barr when he discovers the forgery, and Barr retaliates with his knowledge of the sabotage plot. With June and Dean present Manning reveals Barr's fraud. Barr attempts to return the money but is imprisoned until his motives are disclosed in the press. He then becomes a public hero. The board turn to Barr's way of thinking and fund the ship. Barr is released from prison in time to be at the ship's launch with June.

4.1.2 Background and Reception

The *Red Ensign* was therefore the first fictional film in which the yard itself played a major role. The story was inspired by contemporary newspaper reports about Clydeside shipyards in the Depression[384] and it was one of the few films British films of the 1930s to confront industrial issues.[385] The film was a 'quota quickie' although this term belies the ambition of the film, as suggested by Christie: '*Red Ensign* looks today like a film struggling to cast off quota period cliché and achieve both topicality and a true cinematic scale and rhythm'.[386] The consensus in reviews was that it was a worthy effort that did not fulfil the potential of the subject. Part of this seemed to be a mismatch between the melodramatic plot and the style of filming which was influenced by the documentary aesthetic. The film was praised for the dockyard scenes:

> ...the Clyde humming with activity gives the director, Mr Powell, the chance to bring the camera out into the docks and shipyards and take some of the best

[384] Ian Christie, *Arrows of Desire: The Films of Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger* (London: Waterstone, 1985), p. 30.
[385] Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, p. 319.
[386] Christie, *Arrows of Desire*, p. 30.

> and most interesting photographs that have ever appeared in any British film that was not instructional.[387]

This, however, was also seen to detract from the storytelling:

> You get the yards and the men and the glorious sight of new ships sliding down the slipways. While that is going on the human element disappears...Michael Powell...handles his crowds well but he should beware of treating a subject in the abstract so it is like a chess problem.[388]

The reviewer did conclude however that, 'I would still like you to see the film. It is an effort of the right sort'.[389] Critically there was consensus that both the location and the subject of British shipping were worthy of filmic treatment, even if *Red Ensign* fell short of its aims:

> The story of British shipbuilding has been going begging for a long time as the subject of an epic British film. It is still going begging. Gaumont British have had the wisdom to snap it up but not the wisdom to realise that it should have been their big picture of the year. Jerry Jackson and Michael Powell have used the shipyards as the background to an excellent, high speed melodrama...but there is nothing epic about the production. The real film of the ships of our island Empire is still to be made.[390]

The *Red Ensign* was deliberately patriotic, which was made clear in the opening statement of the film:

> For over 200 years the British Mercantile Marine has carried the RED ENSIGN to every port in the world. To-day many of the ships lie idle for want of cargoes. Shipyards are deserted. The Distress Flag is flying. This is the story of David Barr, shipbuilder, and his fight to bring back prosperity to British ships.

Along with the subject of the film this propagandistic approach was seen as appropriate:

> The word "propaganda" is suspect, but there is nothing so very terrible about it and this film shoes how substantially it can add to the attractions of the screen.

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[387] 'New Gallery- Red Ensign', *Times*, 5 March 1934.
[388] 'Red Ensign at the New Gallery', *Times*, 4 March 1934.
[389] Ibid.
[390] 'The Red Ensign', *Observer*, 4 March 1934.

> Without the propagandist element *Red Ensign* would be a stereotyped story of a business rivalry...[391]

4.1.3 Style and subject

The style of the film, which some critics had seen as confusing, was influenced by the documentary movement and also had elements of a more realist approach to cinema. To the latter end, the film was shot on location and used Scottish actors in an attempt to give the film authenticity. Powell was proud of '…the elaborate staging of the shipyard, the big sweeping exteriors [filmed on location in Glasgow], the high standard of the performances and the sincerity of the actors, the overall seriousness of my approach to directing our story...'[392] Mark Duguid notes that the film has been interpreted as a call for 'intervention to develop the British film industry,' and in addition as: 'a kind of manifesto for Powell's kind of cinema, challenging the emerging documentary movement – the film even includes a character called Grierson, in a nod to John Grierson, one of the most prominent British documentarists...'[393] These potential influences were not noted in reviews at the time. The documentary style, however, set a precedent for the portrayal of maritime industries in fictional treatments which would be borne out in both *The Shipbuilders* and *Floodtide.*

In terms of the subject of the film two strands need to be considered; first, generic industry and worker relations and second, the shipping industry in particular. That only a relatively small number of films dealt with the issue of industrial relations at this time was in part due to the restrictions imposed by censorship, which specifically discouraged any film that dealt with civil unrest or strikes.[394] As Richards quotes, from a contemporary BBFC report:

> Strikes or labour unrest where the scene is laid in England, have never been shown in any detail. It is impossible to show such strikes without taking a definite side either with or against the strikers and this would at once range the

[391] 'New Gallery- *Red Ensign'*, *Times*, 5 March 1934.
[392] Michael Powell quoted in James Howard, *Michael Powell*, (London: Batsford, 1996), p. 24.
[393] Mark Duguid, *Red Ensign* (1934), Screenonline, BFI http://screenonline.org.uk/film/id/438782/index.html [accessed 24 December 2009]
[394] Discussed by Richards in *The Age of the Dream Palace*, pp. 120-123.

> films as political propaganda of a type that we have always held to be unsuitable in this country.[395]

As James' research on working class tastes in film and literature has shown elements of the establishment 'believed that one of the principle role of popular leisure was to raise class consciousness' and it was 'the potential political challenge from below, that they feared most.'[396] All this made the telling of Red Clydeside, truth or myth, virtually impossible. Instead, the narrative is delivered very much from the point of view of the middle class owners. While Barr is sympathetic to his workers, his stance is that of the left-wing intellectual rather than a committed socialist. As the *Monthly Film Bulletin* noted with regards to *Red Ensign*, 'Politics, patriotism and industrial disputes are brought in but the treatment avoids controversy'.[397] The film resolves this issue by stressing that co-operation between the shipbuilder and the workers is the way to save British industry. It was an equation that required investment both in people and in new technology. This attitude was becoming more prominent in film and the necessity for co-operation and respect amongst classes, would become an important tenet of cinematic propaganda during the Second World War.

Few contemporary feature films represented other aspects of maritime activity. One exception was *Turn of the Tide* (1935), which drew essentially the same conclusion as The *Red Ensign*. Set in a village with a long fishing tradition it dealt with the rivalry between the two main fishing families. When they are faced with competition from larger ports the families find that their best option for survival is to jointly invest in new technology and to leave aside old grudges. Like the *Red Ensign*, *Turn of the Tide* now seems to share themes in common with films made during the Second World War, concentrating as it did on the whole community working together. *The Turn of the Tide* was critically well received, won third prize at the Venice Film Festival and came sixth in *Film Weekly's* poll of the best British films in 1936.[398] Graham Greene thought it 'one of the best English films I have yet seen, apart from the

[395] From a censorship report (BBFC Scenario Reports 1932/209) on *Tidal Waters*, a proposed film on the strike of Thames watermen quoted in Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, p. 120.
[396] Robert James, *Popular Cinema Going and Working Class Taste in Britain, 1930-39* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 203.
[397] 'Red Ensign', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 1/4, (1934), p. 29.
[398] 'Best British Films', *Film Weekly*, 8 May, 1937.

"documentaries" in which this country has long led the world'.[399] Yet the film had a limited impact in the UK, where it failed to get a wide distribution.[400] These films, however, did set the precedent of the thematic approach to the maritime industries that would dominate their representation during the Second World War.

5. Shipbuilding Films during the Second World War

Wartime provided a much-needed boost to the shipbuilding industry but also presented a problem in terms of rebuilding a labour force to man the yards. *The Shipbuilders* is the only film that gave the subject a serious fictional treatment. It is however worth looking first at the musical comedy *Shipyard Sally* and the MoI shorts in order to contextualise the theme of shipbuilding as portrayed during the Second World War.

5.1 *Shipyard Sally*

Shipyard Sally was released in August 1939, and was still being shown at the outbreak of hostilities, but technically it was not made as a war film. The film was a vehicle for the hugely popular Gracie Fields,[401] who specialised in portraying Northern working class figures. Like many of the working class comedy films of the period it was virtually ignored by critics and largely seen as superficial and sometimes as base, despite some admiration for the talents of Fields:

> ...Miss Fields is an accomplished comic actress who comes on as an agreeable surprise...*Shipyard Sally* is one of the usual English messes, a miserably unreal story, in which the script can never make up its mind if it is a musical comedy or a Powerful Drama. Like much English humour it is in execrable taste.[402]

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[399] Graham Greene, *Spectator*, 25 October 1935, in Parkinson (ed.), *Mornings in the Dark*, p. 40.
[400] Richards, *The Age of the Dream Palace*, p. 42.
[401] Between 1936 and 1939 Fields was the top female star at the British cinema before she took an engagement in Canada in 1939, raising £300,000 for the Navy League. Her popularity waned as the British press portrayed her as deserting the country in its hour of need, and did not recover to the heights of her popularity in the 1930s. Jeffrey Richards, 'Fields, Dame Gracie (1898-1979)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, 2004: www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/31106/ [accessed 28 May 2010].
[402] 'The Movies', *New Statesman*, 3 August 1939.

It did, however, prove popular with audiences, coming third in the *Kinematograph Weekly's* 'Box Office Winners' in November 1939.[403]

In the film Sally is working in a pub in Clydeside when the yards are forced to close because of the Depression. She galvanizes the unemployed men to take action reminding them that 'You are the greatest shipbuilders in the world, Britain owes you a lot, and you ought to remind her of it'. They petition Lord Randall, head of a committee that is to decide the fate of the Glasgow industry, and Sally is nominated to go to London to present their case. Most of the film is taken up with her farcical attempts with her father to meet Randall. All these efforts appear to have been in vain. On returning to Glasgow, however, she is hailed as a hero, as the newspapers report that Randall has decided in favour of resuming shipbuilding on the Clyde. The final scene shows Sally singing *Land of Hope and Glory* superimposed over a sequence of the men returning to work, the laying of a keel, men working with molten steel and riveting, climaxing in the launch of RMS *Queen Mary* attended by the King and Queen.

Despite the over-simple, romantic approach, and the fact that the majority of the film is not set in the yards, *Shipyard Sally* had a surprising number of characteristics in common with both the documentary shorts and *The Shipbuilders.* It used the closure of the yards as its starting point and made use of documentary footage in the opening and closing sequences. It highlighted the skill of the shipbuilders and that the country as a whole had a debt to them, and ended with shots of the workers returning to the yards. It was also centrally concerned with the issue of class which would also be a major concern of *The Shipbuilders* and *Floodtide.* Landy suggests that Sally becomes the symbol for 'interclass solidarity' and that '...the film also portrays the spectre of unemployment and contrasts between working-class indebtedness and economic failure and the indolent life of the upper classes...'[404] This also linked back to *Milestones* which had seen the shipyard owners renounce their indulgent lifestyle after realising the plight of their workers.

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[403] 'Box Office Winners', *Kinematograph Weekly,* 11 January, 1940.
[404] Marcia Landy, *British Genres: Cinema and Society 1930-1960* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 340.

The use of the *Queen Mary* launch as the climax was significant. Work on the ship, then known as Cunarder 534, had stopped in 1931 and the *Queen Mary* 'came to symbolise the decline of the industry, and the great rusting hull stood out as a beacon of despair'.[405] It conversely became a symbol of optimism in 1934 when the Government advanced three million pounds to enable work to proceed. The same footage would also be used in the climax to *The Shipbuilders*. The Cunarder's fate was followed by the newsreels, which reported on the return to work and the closeness of completion as well as on the launch.[406]

5.2 The MoI Shorts

The MoI shorts made during the Second World War were born directly out of documentary movement and involved many of the same filmmakers. Eight MoI shorts were made primarily about shipbuilding over the course of the war. The films were used to emphasise the importance of the industry to the war effort, reassure the public that the country's shipbuilding capacity could meet the needs of war, for recruitment and to a limited extent to advocate a better future for the yards after the war.

The MoI films[407] on the subject of shipbuilding emphasised the long tradition of the industry in Britain's regions. The most thought-provoking of these was *Tyneside Story* (1943), which looked to the future of the industry after the war and, as will be seen, paralleled the message of Baxter's *The Shipbuilders*. The short begins in the yards left derelict by the Depression looking at the history of the area, concluding that the 'history of the Tyne is the history of building ships in prosperity and adversity'. It emphasised the skill of the men and their pride in their work. One man, running his own shop, is told by his wife that he would be mad to go back, now that they have a good business, but he replies: '...I worked in the yards for thirty years and I learned a trade, a trade where a man can show his skill - anyone can do this job'.

[405] Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders*, p. 182.
[406] *British Movietone News*, No. 252A, *British Movietone News* 276A. It was also the subject of a number of documentaries, for example: *Heavy Industries* (1936) which detailed the building of the ship, and *Wonder Ship* (1936) which documented her maiden voyage.
[407] There is a longer discussion of the role of MoI in Chapter 4.

The film recognised the difficulties in manning the yards, with the lack of skilled workers available, men away in the forces or working in alternative occupations. It was aimed at recruitment and in particular in attracting women to the workforce. According to Johnman and Murphy, however, there was considerable antagonism towards women working in the yards.[408] The film puts a positive gloss on this showing women training in the yards with one of the female welders described 'as good as any of the men'.

There were indications in the film that the recall to the yards was not altogether welcomed: some workers were happily settled in new positions. Some resented the fact that they had been turned away in the 1930s when they were desperate for jobs, and they feared this would be repeated at the end of the war once the immediate demand for ships was over. This was underlined at the end of the film. The narrator speaking over stirring music eulogising the work of the Tyneside yards is interrupted by a shot of a worker who questions:

> Ah but wait a minute. Tyneside's busy enough today, old 'uns and young 'uns hard at work, making good ships, but just remember what the yards looked like five years ago: idle, empty, some of them derelict and the skilled men that worked in them scattered and forgotten. Will it be the same five years from now? That's what we on Tyneside want to know.

It is not surprising that the film stopped short of looking at the tensions within the industry, including the many instances of strikes even though emergency legislation had made such action illegal.[409] There were, however, instances in other MoI shorts that hinted at difficulties in industrial relations, although in such a way as to offer reassurance of the loyalty of the workers to the war effort. For example in *Shipbuilders* (1940) the commentator, interviewing a riveter, comments, 'you're known as the black squad[410] of the boiler makers' union aren't you?' The riveter replies: 'We are, but believe me we are white when trouble comes along and at

[408] Johnman and Murphy, *Shipbuilding and the State since 1918*, p. 67. According to Martin Bellamy most women were forced to leave the yards at the end of the war, although there were traditionally two roles that were fulfilled by women: tracing plans to make blueprints and French-polishing furniture for the ships. Bellamy, *The Shipbuilders,* p .22. There was also a superstition that it was unlucky for the future of ship to have women in construction areas. Rodgers, *Feminine Power at Sea*, p. 3.

[409] Johnman and Murphy, *Shipbuilding and the State since 1918*, p. 70.

[410] What became known as the 'black squad' was made up of riveters, welders, burners, platers, caulkers and shipwrights.

present we are working like the very devil to beat our common enemy'. In the 1944 *Clydebuilt* there is rather a curious speech, just after a ship launch by one of the workers (possibly a foreman or a union representative), appealing to everyone to work together, although there has been no indication in the film that they were not:

> There is one thing we must never forget at any time, never to fall out with each other, but work with each other as much as we can, as only that way can we ever attain the ideal of smashing fascism.

Most of the shorts used a similar format in using workers speaking directly to camera and notably did not portray shipyard owners, unlike all the fictional films which heavily featured them as paternalistic nurturers of their workers. The emphasis was upon the workers as highly skilled craftsmen, enthusiastic to engage with new technology and committed to the war effort.[411] Not only were the workers the most skilled in the world, British ships were the best in the world and this was the result of a long tradition. Nearly all the shorts began with history: the long view by reference to Britain's long association with the sea: the short view by reference to the Depression and: more personal history by reference to familial ties with generations of the same family shown working within the yards.[412] For example the commentator in *Steel Goes to Sea* (1941) comments:

> [Britain] is fitted by nature to be the birth place of ships...The skill and craft of shipbuilding is a tradition which carries on beyond the span of any man's life... it must be handed down from one to another, from father to son, from brother to brother.

And from *Shipbuilders* (1940):

> It was the work of men such as these that defeated the Spanish Armada; it was their work that shattered Napoleon's dreams of world conquest. Their work will bring back the world again to sanity...These are the men with 1000 years of craftsmanship behind them.

[411] This was the propaganda message but Barnett has argued that tradition 'fossilised' the industry. See Correlli Barnett, *The Audit of War: The Illusion of Britain as a Great Nation* (London: Macmillan, 1986), pp. 107-124.

[412] Shipyard workforces were hierarchical and promotion nearly impossible, therefore apprenticeships in the skilled trades were highly valued and operated on patronage. This meant that many sons followed their fathers into the yards.

As this indicates, while genuine difficulties within the industry were not totally obscured, the overall view of the worker was highly romanticised and couched in a familiar rhetoric, often rooted in naval tradition. The keynotes of naval tradition that is prowess and familial tie were easily transposed to make 'heroes' of shipyard workers. Not only had Britain led the world in shipbuilding and sea power, the yards were genuinely manned by generations of the same family but ships themselves had been powerfully promoted as symbols of national pride and technological advancement.

A practiced 'authenticity', rooted in the documentary movement, was prominent in these films. The techniques of filming on location, using workers speaking directly to camera and re-enacting activities were also used in the MoI shorts that featured the fishing industry during the war. They were subject to a similar rhetoric that emphasised skill and tradition. For example, the narrator of *Sailors without Uniform* (1940) states:

> A large part of the destiny of Great Britain and the British people has been shaped by the fishing tradition. They have learnt their trade; they have been brought up on the tradition of the sea... like their fathers and grandfathers before them...and now that Great Britain together with her allies has taken up arms...the British fishing community as they did in the last Great War is supplying the men and the boats in the service of her country...and this they are doing with the same cheerful camaraderie that they go about their peacetime occupation...In Britain today, no matter to what class a man belongs, there is evidence as never before of a quiet determination to crush this German war of aggression, no matter what the cost, and there's no flag wagging and very little noise.

As this indicates there was a largely homogeneous approach towards workers in the maritime industries on film. This tended to flatten the nuances of both regional diversity and the traditions of different occupations. Other than regional accents the *Tyneside Story* could easily have been that of Greenock, Barrow or Dublin.

Similar rhetoric was carried over into fictional film, most particularly in *The Man at the Gate* (1941) set in a fishing village. The central message is one of keeping faith particularly in dealing with loss and sacrifice, with the linchpin of the movie being the King's 1939 Christmas broadcast. In this he quotes from the poem that is the

inspiration for the film, *The Gate of the Year.*[413] It emphasised family ties, the tradition of Britons as seafarers and duty to country. But, as the *Monthly Film Bulletin's* criticism of the film indicated, there was now an expectation that fiction films of the sea would follow the lines of documentary style:

> The ordinary English life and settings will probably make this film popular, but those who remember the same director's *Turn of the Tide* will regret he should have ignored the work done in the documentary field in the six intervening years and be content with trying to repeat his former success.[414]

Common elements in the representation of maritime industries were to be found regardless of genre, crossing over comedies, dramas and the information film. First there was a certain romanticisation of the worker in a tight knit community. Second was an emphasis on the unique skills of the workers passed through the family line and the debt owed to them by the whole country. Third, the documentary style became the dominant mode of representation of maritime industries. These aspects were forcefully projected by the only major fictional representation of shipbuilding during the war.

5.3 *The Shipbuilders* (1943)

5.3.1 Synopsis

The film begins in 1931 as John Pagan and Son's shipbuilding firm launch their latest merchant vessel. Pagan's son Leslie knows that there are no more orders. At the launch party Pagan declines participating in a pool of owners who intend to buy up the shipyards and dismantle them for scrap. In the pub the workers express their fears that the yard will close, although Danny Shields, riveter and previously batman to Leslie Pagan during the First World War, maintains that the yard will survive.

Pagan is forced to lay off his workers and goes to London to try to drum up new business. He keeps Danny on at the yard although there is little for him to do and he leaves feeling humiliated. Out of work, Danny's home life begins to suffer, his wife

[413] Poem written by Minnie Louise Haskins in the collection, *The Gate of the Year: A Book of Poems* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940).
[414] 'The Man at the Gate', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 8/85 (1941), p.1.

leaves for a job elsewhere, and he has to look after his youngest son. His eldest son Peter, also unemployed, becomes involved in a gang and after a brawl is accused of murder. Pagan returns from London in time to help secure Peter's future first by engaging a good lawyer to act on his behalf, and subsequently by enabling him to join the Merchant Navy. The judge makes it clear that the young gang's predicament was a result of unemployment, and it should be the responsibility of the nation to provide better prospects for them.

John Pagan dies and Leslie comes to the conclusion that he must sell the yard. He offers Danny work with him at a new house in Surrey, but Danny refuses and holds on to his faith in the shipbuilding industry. When Leslie goes to the scrap merchant to sell, he sees that the spoils of the Glasgow yards are being sold abroad for foreign rearmament.[415] Realising the danger this poses to the nation he returns to London to fight for government protection of the industry and succeeds in gaining a naval contract. The shipyard opens to the workers once more and the war begins. When Glasgow is bombed Danny's wife returns to be with her family. The yard now has so much work that they are under pressure and feeling the lack of workers that were lost to the industry in the years of depression.

Leslie's son, John, runs away to sea when he meets Peter in London and together they sail on convoy in a Pagan built ship. Heavily damaged the ship returns to Glasgow and they hear of Peter's heroic action that enabled the ship to reach home but resulted in his death. Pagan's son is badly injured.[416] The yard continues to flourish and Pagan starts to make long term plans to ensure its future after the war. The film concludes with shots of the launch of the *Queen Mary* with the King and Queen in attendance.

[415] This paralleled the National Shipbuilder' Security company which in the 1930s bought and broke up large numbers of yards, and the British Shipping (Assistance) Act of 1935 which subsidised tramp shipping and favoured the scrapping of surplus shipping capacity.
[416] Some synopses of the film in reviews report him as dead; he is in fact seen being stretchered off the ship, and the synopsis in the publicity material for the film stated that he was 'badly injured'.

5.3.2 Background and Reception

The film was based on the 1935 novel of the same title by George Blake.[417] The circumstances of the novel - the slump in the Glasgow shipbuilding industry during the Depression and the effects upon the workforce - are faithfully reproduced. The significant difference is that the film carries on the story to include the events of the Second World War. In this the film projects a more positive ending which sees the yards open again, although this is tempered with a caution: the nation must bear the responsibility to see that the renewed prosperity will be protected in peace.

The director, John Baxter, had made a career producing 'quota quickies' in the 1930s when the prevailing cinema trends paid relatively little attention to the concerns of the working classes.[418] Baxter's work went against the grain, often championing the cause of the ordinary worker. Most famously Baxter made *Love on the Dole* in 1941, after it had been turned down by the censors as 'sordid' in 1936.[419] The film is often cited as evidence of how attitudes had changed towards the plight of the working classes during the Second World War.[420] McKibbin suggests the film could now be seen in a 'homiletic' way as the conditions of the Depression were now in the past. Instead of challenging authority the film could now be seen as one which outlined that the war was being fought to prevent the return of such hardship.[421] Yet whilst it was now possible to get such a film made, it did not follow that there was a radical change in cinematic output. *Love on the Dole* and *The Shipbuilders* were among isolated examples of films that overtly dealt with social conditions and which lobbied for a fairer Britain after the war.[422]

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[417] Howard in his book *Michael Powell*, p. 24 says that it was a 'loose remake' of *The Red Ensign*, but although there are similarities of theme *The Shipbuilders* is too close to the novel to be related to the earlier film.

[418] Geoff Brown and Tony Aldgate, *The Common Touch: The Films of John Baxter* (London: BFI/ National Film Theatre, 1989), p. 7.

[419] Stephen Constantine, '*Love on the Dole* and its Reception in the 1930s', *Literature and History,* 8/2 (1982), p. 234.

[420] Ibid, p. 244 and Aldgate and Richards, *Britain can Take*, p. 14.

[421] McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England*, pp. 424-5.

[422] For a discussion of MoI films that deal with post-war reconstruction see: Toby Haggith, 'Post-war Construction as Depicted in Official British Films of the Second World War', *Imperial War Museum Review*, 7 (1992), pp. 34-45.

The subject of Blake's novel fitted with Baxter's vision. It was both a tribute to the character of the Glasgow worker and a statement of the crucial importance of the industry to the wellbeing of the whole community. The centrality of Britain's shipping to her wartime survival made it obvious propaganda material. The impetus for the adaptation, however, came from Lady Annie Yule (a founder of British National Films with J. Arthur Rank and John Corefield). Her concern with patriotism was reflected in the name of the film company, and she had already funded the naval spy film, *Contraband* in 1941.[423]

Contemporary reviews of *The Shipbuilders* were largely favourable with a consensus on the film's sincerity. There were, however two sources of criticism. First, some reviewers considered it too long with some dull sections. Secondly, there was a general feeling that the sequences featuring the Glasgow residents and yards were more successful than those in the boardroom and in London.[424] The film does not seem to have found a wide popular audience. The exception may have been in Clydeside where it was enthusiastically received by the *Glasgow Evening News*:

> Superlative entertainment – warmly sympathetic in its approach to our workers and their problems, rich in cameo, comedy and drama. Thanks John Baxter, for a most intelligent production, and hasten back on another crusade – we've scores of topics for you.[425]

The *Daily Telegraph's* Campbell Dixon gave the most negative review, heavily criticising the film on the grounds of a slow pace as symptomatic of both the director and British filmmaking in general. Dixon did however concede that the film had an authenticity although his tone is somewhat patronising:

> The Glasgow characters, more especially the little riveter and his wife are sharply etched against a convincing background and the effects of idleness on home and character are suggested with moving pathos and power...Here is an actor [Morland Graham as Danny Shields] without the mannerisms of egoism who can communicate by a pause at the door, a cap held in an uncertain hand, the helplessness and stubbornness of the poor...'[426]

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[423] Brown and Aldgate, *The Common Touch,* p. 96.
[424] See 'The Shipbuilders', *Guardian*, 9 March 1944 and Campbell Dixon, 'Sincere but Slow: Moving Tale of the Clydeside, *Daily Telegraph,* 13 March 1944.
[425] Quoted in Brown and Aldgate, *The Common Touch,* p. 98.
[426] Campbell Dixon, 'Sincere but Slow: Moving Tale of Clydeside', *Daily Telegraph*, 13 March 1944.

Strangely Dixon, in a long review, did not consider the film in terms of its social message or war propaganda, as did other reviewers. The *Guardian*'s reviewer commented that: 'This painstaking production brings Britain's shipping industry to the screen, and George Blake's story makes some attempt at political comment, an unusual effort in the cinema'.[427] *The Spectator* suggested that:

> In its pictures of derelict Clydeside shipyards, mean gang-ridden Glasgow streets, the Saturday afternoon catharsis of an international football march, the domestic heroisms of unemployment and the later braveries of the blitz we have a rare screen phenomenon: a picture of an industry presented not simply as a background to a personal adventure but as an adventure in itself, and one in which the nation had better begin to consciously participate or face a repetition of the between-wars neglect.[428]

Although reviews pointed out the rarity of the film's social portrayals, they did not dwell on the social or political implications. Beyond a recognition that the Glasgow worker was in their view convincingly represented and that the shipbuilding industry should not be allowed to decline, the indicators of social inequality and national responsibility were ignored. Although, in fact the central issue of the film was one of class rather than the regional specificity of Glasgow. Neither have these aspects been considered in more recent work. In the only monograph on Baxter, Brown and Aldgate underplay the political content of his films because, 'Baxter's characters complain about their lot and look towards better times, but they never raise the flag of revolution. The demarcation lines between 'them' and 'us' are clearly drawn and accepted'.[429]They also assert that there was nothing 'doctrinaire' about his treatment of the working man, and that his motivation was 'from the heart' rather than to promote a particular political agenda.[430] It is true that *The Shipbuilders* shies away from a radical position. The shipyard owner is presented as sympathetically as the riveter, and Danny's deference to Pagan is both obvious and slightly uncomfortable to a modern audience. It should be noted, however, that some of Danny's work colleagues believe that he puts too much faith in his relationship with Pagan, and he is mocked for the favouritism shown him.

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[427] 'The Shipbuilders', *Guardian,* 9 March 1944.
[428] Edgar Anstey, 'The Shipbuilders', *Spectator,* 17 March 1944.
[429] Brown and Aldgate, *The Common Touch,* p .9.
[430] Ibid.

If the characters themselves are seen as compliant there are indicators to the audience that the status quo should be questioned. For example the home lives of Pagan and Shields are shown in sharp contrast. The contrasts are not of the kind made in *In Which We Serve*, which shows families of different classes enjoying their own pleasures uncritically. *The Shipbuilders* shows Danny's struggle just to put food on the table, and his unemployment leads to a breakdown of his marriage. His youngest child is seen playing at the table of their single room apartment with a roughly hewn wooden toy boat. Pagan's child is seen in an immaculate playroom with freakishly large and overpowering toys: a life-size toy soldier behind a rocking horse shot from an angle that makes it also appear life-size, and a yacht that is bigger than the child. Pagan is also seen to be willing to give up on the business and move to the country, and this hints at Weiner's assessment:

> Businessmen increasingly shunned the role of industrial entrepreneur for the more socially rewarding role of gentleman (landed, if possible). The upshot was a dampening of industrial energies, the most striking single consequence of the gentrification of the English middle class.'[431]

It is of course Danny's energy that convinces Pagan to try again, turning this potential debate into another example of class co-operation with mutual benefits.

Even if the film's political moments are naive, it seems unlikely that someone who was willing to wait five years for the censors to pass *Love on the Dole* and then to produce such a controversial piece in wartime had no political agenda. If Baxter's work was not radical, it did promote socialist principles. It also foregrounded the idea that to win the war the whole of society needed to work together: a familiar theme in films of the latter part of the war.[432] In Baxter's film, however, the common man did not need to be convinced of this: he was already more than willing to participate. What he needed was the opportunity to contribute from a position of strength that is: regular work and decent conditions rather than the instability of the dole. This was both unusual and an important political stance. In many respects Baxter's message was directed to the middle classes. It might be speculated that the relative soft

[431] Martin Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the English Spirit 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Second Edition, 2004), p. 97.
[432] In films such as *In Which We Serve* (1942) and *Millions Like Us* (1943).

political approach was designed not to alienate them: an approach that was similar to the quiet references to unrest in the MoI shorts.

When Danny's son is accused of murder, and the young gang are acquitted, the judge believes that the situation was brought about social conditions. In his speech he forwards the idea that the ruling classes also bear responsibility:

> We have here the tragedy of unemployment, of hands idle through no fault of their own...this may have been a failure on our part to provide these unhappy boys with something better to do than hang about on street corners.

It is significant that Peter's salvation is found at sea and is brought about by both Pagan and Shields. Pagan uses his influence to bring about the work and it is a Pagan ship in which Peter serves. It is his father who built the ship, and after it is torpedoed Peter sacrifices his own life to bring the ship home and he knows that the ship will get there because of his faith in his father's skill. The war also places Pagan's own son literally in the same boat, i.e. symbolically the whole nation in the same boat. As the opening voiceover of the film asserts, Britain's identity is one shaped by her relationship with the sea:

> The story of the British Isles is a story of great seamen and fine ships. With them the British people have found themselves and their place among the nations. From an island nation's need for ships was born a craft and an industry whose achievements have never been surpassed.

The potential loss of that identification, for nation or for individual, is seen as catastrophic. The closing voiceover warns against complacency and makes a plea:

> Back to work, they are always ready to work, these men the world's finest craftsmen. That is their strength, the secret of their courage and achievement. The Dannys of this world have never lost simple faith. For a just cause they are ready to give and suffer without question. All they have ever asked was the opportunity to serve, and not always was it granted: are we to make that mistake again? War gave these men a chance: what of the peace? Shall we again leave our industries to be fought for by lone fighters: be they employer or employee- or shall they be preserved as the heritage and responsibility of the whole nation? Great promises have been made. Great tasks lie before us. Tasks that will need work and sacrifice and SHIPS. In ships and in the British yards that built them lies a splendid past - we built an Empire with ships, saved the freedom of the world with ships. We must build them and use them to do more. Ships can bind together the people in the world to make a great

> new commonwealth. Ships to fight if necessary for the freedom of the rights of the common man wherever he may be found.

This speech is heard over a sequence of the Royal Family launching the *Queen Mary* from Clydeside: a staple image of the shipbuilding film. The voiceover, however, makes this different from previous representations as the inevitable and continuous sign of supremacy. That continuity was under threat and the film is a warning to nurture traditional industries, the general worker as well as the relationship with the sea. In *Shipyard Sally* the launch of the *Queen Mary* is seen as an unequivocal celebration of a community and a nation returning to prosperity, overlaid as it is with the triumphal singing of Land of Hope and Glory. In *The Shipbuilders* it is shown as partial celebration but more particularly as symbolic of a cautionary tale. *The Shipbuilders* came closer than any other maritime film of the war in pushing for a socialist agenda and a better future for both the maritime industries and the working class after the war. The subject of shipbuilding in fictional film was rarely revisited in the second half of the twentieth century: once the needs of a nation at war had been met. *Floodtide* (1949) was the last British feature film made on shipbuilding in the twentieth century.

6. *Floodtide* (1949)

6.1 Synopsis

Floodtide is a 'rags to riches' tale of a young man, David Shields, set in Clydeside. David is determined to work in shipbuilding despite opposition from his father who wants him to stay and work on the family farm. His uncle finds him an apprenticeship at the yards as a riveter. David is soon frustrated: his ambition is to be a ship designer and he is distracted by the entertainments of the city. He comes to the attention of the yard owner, Anstruther, when he criticises the yacht designed by his daughter, Mary, and when a foreman grumbles about his restlessness. While it is impressed upon Shields that every job in the yard is important, the owner (a self-made man) sponsors his education and redeploys him in the drawing office. David proves himself a very talented student and passes first in all his exams. When he is given

responsibility for the design of a new ship for an important client he meets opposition from older members of the workforce but their doubts are allayed when a model of the ship passes all trials. Mary, with whom David is in love, organises a party the night before the launch for all the dignitaries, but David refuses to attend and quarrels with her because he is committed to celebrate the engagement of an old friend from his time in the plating section. Later that night a lighter vessel breaks loose in a storm and threatens damage to the new ship. Mary finds David at the lodgings of an old flame, and he returns to the yard in time to save the ship. David, ashamed of his behaviour, then disappears and is not present at the launch. Anstruther convinces his daughter that it is her responsibility to offer an olive branch, as he will lose his best designer. She finds him back at the farm; they reconcile and agree to marry. As they walk over the hills the ships in the Firth can be seen below them.

6.2 Reception and Background

This film too was based on a novel by George Blake. It was generally praised for the scenes in the dockyard and for individual acting performances, although the plot was seen as somewhat predictable: 'It was a wonderful idea to make a story about the Clyde, and when the film is dealing with the Clydeside it is fine, but when it reverts to its conventional plot it is not so fine'.[433] The realist and documentary style filming of the yards and Glasgow life were particularly appreciated:

> The Clyde shipyard scenes are real and fascinating and the background life of Glasgow with whining trams and raucous dance hall, the gruesome respectability of the suburban villa, and the ruthlessly genuine accent and idiom lend robustness and some novelty to a banal little story.[434]

Or as another commentator put it: 'While this film is confining itself to a documentary account of how ship designers are trained on the Clyde it is reasonably intelligent and sincere'.[435] It had been fifteen years since Powell's *Red Ensign* had been praised on the grounds of the use of authentic accents, and impressive dockyard scenes. Likewise the Glasgow scenes of *The Shipbuilders* were considered more successful

[433] 'Floodtide', *Sunday Graphic*, 20 March 1949.
[434] *Sunday Express*, 20 March 1949.
[435] 'Floodtide', *Times*, 23 March 1949.

than those in London. Although the plot of *Floodtide* was recognised as conventional, there was no note that the way the yards were presented was also something of a cliché. This amnesia must have been partially due to the fact that shipyards were a rare subject for the feature film. What is clear however is that a particular grammar had developed to portray shipbuilding, which could be traced through from the 1930s. In this, anything that deviated from the documentary approach was seen as false.

The film also resembled previous representations in emphasising the pride of the Glasgow shipbuilders and the strength of the tradition of shipbuilding. It opens with sweeping aerial shots of the yards with the subtitle: 'The Clyde – cradle of shipbuilding. This film is dedicated to all the skilled and devoted men in whose hands the proud tradition of the Clyde is in safekeeping'. As the *Daily Graphic's* reviewer indicated, the ideas in this message had already been so effectively culturally communicated as to be widely accepted:

> I do not, I blush to say, know the Clyde, but I do know that shipbuilding is a sort of dedication – and here's a film that gives one a feeling of the small people, the Glasgow boy and the son of a crofter, who do dedicate themselves to producing craft that are known the world over.[436]

The ideas of tradition and a Glaswegian predisposition for skill in shipbuilding appear throughout the film. David's uncle, in trying to persuade his father to allow the boy to leave the farm claims 'the ships are in his blood,' and that he is 'a natural craftsman'. When David is frustrated at his lack of progression and ready to leave the yards his uncle tells him:

> You're working on the Clyde and that's an honour in itself boy if you've the sense to see it. Steamship building started here more than 100 years ago. Take away the Clyde and Britain would be sunk in any war we ever have to fight. This is the cradle of the trade my lad.

The film is upbeat with regards to the future of the industry and Blake's story has an optimism lacking from the novel of *The Shipbuilders*. It clearly locates itself in a post-war world. There is mention of continued rationing but the prospects for the

[436] 'Clyde Pride', *Daily Graphic*, 18 March 1949.

ordinary worker are seen as bright in terms of educational opportunity ('technical colleges are for everybody', Anstruther tells David) and in social mobility. David's social advancement is not portrayed as unproblematic: his loyalty to his old friends is tested, and he has to compromise his lifestyle to fit the middle class respectability demanded by his new position. The idea, however, of 'bettering oneself' is seen as a possibility in a way that would have been unimaginable for Danny Shields in *The Shipbuilders.*

Although *Floodtide* was the last British fictional film to focus on shipbuilding in the twentieth century, it is worth considering the documentary *Seawards the Great Ships* (1960). The treatment was by John Grierson and the film won the 1961 Oscar for best Live Action Short Film. It bore much relation to Rotha's *Shipyard* in terms of aesthetics particularly in making a rhythmic poetry of the sound of the yards, although it was more dramatic with an almost fetishistic launch of a ship. Despite the failing industry, which would see almost total collapse in the following decade, the film feted Clydeside as if still in its heyday. The opening rhetoric was on a par with the wartime MoI shorts: 'Britain is an island nation. An island of islanders and shipbuilders. On its shores generations of craftsmen have made great ships for the world, but nowhere in such profusion as on the River Clyde in Scotland'. Although the film was highly successful, the romantic view, filmed in a style to which shipbuilding had been subject since the 1930s has also been criticised, as Colin MacArthur notes:

> The elementalism and gigantism of the visual and verbal imagery...seem shabby and hollow in the light of what has become of the upper Clyde. Starkly in retrospect, the breast-beating and tub-thumping of *Seawards the Great Ships* offers no comfort to Clydeside workers or guidance to the historical processes which have put them out of work.[437]

The film was co-financed by the Films of Scotland Committee (first set up in 1938) and the Clyde Shipbuilders Association. This followed a long tradition of Scottish film which had largely consisted of non-fiction and commissioned promotional film.[438] The context of industry and Empire that had fostered the documentary movement also dictated the initial output of the Films of Scotland Committee as their

[437] Colin McArthur, *Scotch Reels: Scotland in Cinema and Television* (London: BFI, 1982), p.63.
[438]Richard Butt, 'The Films of Scotland Documentaries History', *Scran*, www.sites.scran.ac.uk/films_of_Scotland/History/index.htm [accessed 30 July 2011].

first seven films were produced for the 1938 Glasgow Empire Exhibition.[439] The impetus behind *Seawards the Great Ships* was not dissimilar to those of the documentary movement during the 1930s in promoting the industry during a downturn, perceived decline and an increasingly competitive international market. It portrayed the workers in terms of their skill, using a familiar rhetoric but was not designed to articulate the plight or reality of the situation of the workers or the community. It borrowed the British rhetoric of the seafaring nation rather than a discretely Scottish voice.

It is perhaps surprising that nobody has made the romantic or nostalgic shipbuilding equivalent of *Brassed Off* (1996), and *Billy Elliot* (2000), dealing with the decline of the mining industry, or *The Full Monty* (1997), dealing with the decline in the steel industry. In the 1970s playwright Peter McDougall wrote a trilogy[440] of BAFTA winning television plays based on the Glaswegian gang fighter, Jimmy Boyle. These used the ailing yards as the backdrop to a dysfunctional Glasgow underclass. The demoralised workforce, knowing that the closure of the yards is inevitable, is presented as work-shy. There is no longer a sense of tradition: instead the emphasis is on immediate gratification through alcohol, violence and sex. Pride and self-confidence are gained only through attaining a 'hard man' image. McDougall's work presents an unremittingly depressing picture and an antithesis to all previous incarnations of the shipbuilder on film.

7. Conclusions

The maritime sphere beyond the naval film remained a relatively unexplored area. In this, film largely replicated the absence of the maritime industries in comparison to naval action in the dominant Victorian narrative of British history. It is also noticeable that much of the rhetoric used in the deliberate projection of the maritime industries in national causes was borrowed or indistinguishable from naval rhetoric. This was necessary in terms of propaganda because the naval rhetoric drew together

[439] Ibid.
[440] These were shown as part of the BBC *Play for Today* series, directed by John Mackenzie: *Just Another Saturday* (1975); *The Elephant's Graveyard* (1976); and *Just a Boy's Game* (1979).

the disparate parts of the commercial maritime sector to align it with the grand narrative of Britain and the sea. The grand narrative had of course been predicated upon and was recognisable through naval tradition.

In the early twentieth century the proliferation of filmed ship launches was the most prominent indicator of merchant activity to the general public and was symbolic of national unity. These, however, sidelined the worker who increasingly became to play a more central role in the representation of shipbuilding through the documentary movement and in the fictional film after 1930.

From *The Shipbuilders* onwards, there was a line of continuity in which the industry was used to question the nature of society as well as the nature of the shipbuilding. What is also clear is that the image of the shipbuilder in fictional film was associated only with Glasgow. Only in the MoI shorts were other regions of the United Kingdom represented.[441] The use of regional identity, however, was not used in representation of itself but rather to reinforce national identity: that is in emphasising the relationship of Britain with the sea. The great similarities between the representation of shipyard workers and fishermen demonstrated a homogenised and romantic approach to the worker that tended to obscure regional diversity.

The main cluster of shipbuilding films occurred between 1934 and 1945 and it is perhaps a mistake to look for regional difference. The inclusion of a broader range of class representations and socialist principles did not signal a more nuanced reading of the range of British identities on film. The 1930s films were produced at a point where Britain was deliberately promoting the industries of nation and Empire and emphasising her technological advancements. The films of the Second World War promoted national co-operation. In both cases the diversity and capacity of industry within the stable homogeneity of 'nation' were the keynotes: not regional identities and difference. In this sense they were very 'British' films representing Britain as a

[441] This needs further analysis in comparison to other regional identities in the United Kingdom. Bellamy asks the same question in *Shipbuilding and Cultural Identity on Clydeside* and suggests that other regions such as Merseyside and the North East were more associated with the docks and coalmining respectively. There is also the possibility that it is linked with the romantic image of Red Clydeside and the strength of the Unions which emanated largely from the Glasgow yards. In addition Greenock existed only because of the yards, they were its identity, and while other locations prospered through shipbuilding it was not the reason for them being built.

nation state. As propaganda they did not admit decline even if the impetus behind the production of these films may have been prompted by fears of decline. All the shipbuilding fictional films were about solutions: the main one being a Britain united across both class and regional boundaries. This is underlined by the fact that films did not create a new rhetoric but used the Victorian rhetoric of navy and nation in the representation of the maritime industries. Even the Scottish made *Seawards the Great Ships* employed this same approach, evoking the island-nation's relationship with the sea rather than a purely Scottish maritime identity. It is noticeable that with the collapse of the shipbuilding industry the community as represented in the later television plays was insular and cut off from wider national issues. Here there was regional specificity, although it came at a point when the shipbuilding industry had all but collapsed and was no longer as valuable as propaganda either in the promotion of Scotland or a wider Britain.[442]

The mode of presentation for the industrial maritime film was remarkably consistent. It was rooted in a documentary tradition, and the films were judged on how far that criterion was met. A particular socialist realism aesthetic became the norm in the presentation of shipbuilding, which was linked to an expression of leftist sympathies in the films. The maritime film also became one of the few locations that broached a serious consideration of industrial relations and conditions of workers in the first third of the twentieth century: although this was tempered by simplistic solutions through class co-operation and paternalism.

The cluster of films about shipbuilding that were made between 1930 and 1945 were representative of wider cinematic shifts. First film saw a greater acknowledgement of the working classes as serious protagonists on screen. Before the Second World War working class characters on screen were usually secondary, fulfilling either a comic or criminal role. The virtual conservative hegemony was challenged by a social democratic stance on film by the documentary movement. This was, however, limited by a homogenous approach towards workers of any industry, emphasising issues of class rather than regional diversity. The subjects that interested the movement tended to be those which affected social conditions – such as housing, education,

[442] See the Epilogue for more on this.

infrastructure, as well as technological development. Tallents' call for a new way to represent Britain on film had found new subjects and a new aesthetic but not a new rhetoric. British industry was placed at a forefront in the light of increasing global competition and assimilated into the 'story' of Britain's maritime history becoming on screen as representative of nation as much as any traditional institution.

Chapter 4: Dunkirk Spirit

1. Introduction

This chapter considers the use of the navy in the propaganda films of the Second World War. While these films have been the subject of much academic focus two elements have been underestimated. First, insufficient attention has been paid to the films made prior to 1939 which had firmly established the symbol of the navy as representative of state and as a locus of the discussion of national character. Second, the influence of detailed shifts in public perception that occurred in relation to naval events during the war meant that the precise points at which films were released had considerable impact on their reception. By analysing the films in the context of these events it is possible to appreciate the continuing significance of the maritime sphere as a site of national identity and to see that even in a period of intense propaganda activity that such identity was subject to a process of negotiation and interpretation.

The chapter begins by giving overviews of the Ministry of Information and film production between 1939 and 1945, before considering the existing literature on maritime film of the Second World War. A case study of *For Freedom*, is preceded by a section looking at civilian attitudes towards the navy during wartime. The second case study looks at two official films: *Channel Incident* (1940) and *The Little Ships of England* (1943) in the context of 'Dunkirk spirit' arguing that its role in the configuration of the 'People's War'[443] influenced naval films produced in the latter

[443] This thesis deliberately makes use of the now common practice of using 'The People's War' as shorthand for a conflict in which the whole country is perceived to have been involved, e.g. Malcolm Smith, *Britain and 1940: History Myth and Popular Memory* (London: Routledge, 2000), p.70. It does so in the recognition that this was one of several definitions implicitly suggested by Angus Calder in his book; Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Cape, 1969) pp. 17-19. In terms of a war in which the requirements of a more socially democratic country were made apparent by mobilisation (the sense in which it is used by, for example, Jeremy Crang in his *The British Army and the People's War, 1939-1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), there were obvious propaganda advantages to portraying on screen a war in which participation and sacrifice were equalised. Within the space confines of this thesis, it is not possible to engage more extensively with the politicized belief that the popular response to the crisis of 1940-1942 created a moment when radical change was possible, but eventually not achieved (eg Calder, *The People's War*, p.18.). So this study, like some works of film history, is willing to see *In Which We Serve* as a potentially 'people's war' film, whereas in the full breadth of Calder's vision it might be seen as typical of the reassertion of traditional power that in fact betrayed popular enthusiasm.

part of the war. The third case study rexamines *In Which We Serve*: the most remembered and most written about naval film of the Second World War.

The choice of case studies for this period is particularly problematic as there was a concentration of well-known and historically significant productions which could alone form the basis of a thesis. There are notable examples, *Ships with Wings*, *San Demetrio London* and *Western Approaches* for instance, which while referred to, are not analysed in depth here. The tendency of film historians to concentrate on film from 1939 onwards, and the relative lack of availability of pre-war films to both historians and the general public make these gaps more obvious here than anywhere else in a thesis which is necessarily selective in surveying such a broad sweep. The three case studies here have been chosen as representative first of the early war films, second of official film and third of the more 'democratic' films made later in the war. One of the major points of this chapter is that precise moments of release of particular films is an under studied aspect of the Second World War film and these three examples are particularly pertinent in this respect.

2. Historiography

The films of the Second World War are one of the most analysed aspects of British cinema. The two primary shifts that have been associated with wartime cinema are summarised by Richards thus: 'It is a commonplace of film history that the two major changes in British cinema... were 'democratisation' and 'documentarization,' the pursuit of reality and realism in subject matter and visual style'.[444] These well-known phenomenon have led to a concentration on the small body of films that displayed these characteristics, and which are most associated with the idea of the 'People's War'. The 'democratisation' aspect has been discussed primarily in terms of class and in comparison with the common view of cinema of the thirties. That is the generalisation that 1930s cinema concentrated on the ruling classes and that working class characters were either not portrayed, or provided clichéd comic relief.[445] As has been seen in the previous two chapters the documentary approach, which embraced a

[444] Aldgate and Richards, *Britain can Take It, p*. 315.
[445] Discussed in Shafer, *British Popular Films 1929-1939*, pp. 16-20.

wider section of the community, was already familiar in respect of maritime subjects but became more prominent in mainstream fictional film during the Second World War.

Critics have tended to divide the films of the Second World War between the early flag-wavers, such as *The Lion has Wings* (1939) and *Convoy* (1940) and the later more realistic films such as *In Which We Serve, The Foreman went to France* (1942), *The First of the Few* (1942), *This Happy Breed* (1944) and *San Demetrio London.*[446] These later films formed the critical canon of the period. They were seen as an improvement on what went before, in terms of propagandistic effectiveness, social inclusivity and in the quality of British filmmaking.[447] Latterly, the concentration on these films has begun to be readdressed. For example, Richards' essay on *Ships with Wings* has demonstrated how popular the film was with audiences, despite being considered a critical failure.[448] This has meant that the film has been reassessed in terms of how effective it was as a piece of propaganda and raised questions about what kind of films that the audience wanted, rather than assuming that they were clamouring for the more realistic approach advocated by the critics.

The process of reassessing the critical canon is ongoing. Historians from the 1990s onwards have applied a much more historic-social approach, but most analysis still concentrates on the same body of films, consistently ignoring less well known productions. Although studies of national identity acknowledge the shifting nature of wartime identity a 'People's War,' blanket of assumptions has been thrown over films of the Second World War. Rattigan for example attributes the number of naval related films at the start of the war to a matter of class, with an idea that the ruling elite felt more at home with the navy than the other services: 'Filmmakers more comfortable with the upper-class ideology of pre-war cinema might well have naturally gravitated toward that branch of the services with which they felt most comfortable, the navy'.[449] As will be seen, however, there were many other factors that contributed to the use of the navy on film. As may be expected from Rattigan's

[446] Chapman, *Past and Present*, p. 92.
[447] Discussed in Chapman, *Past and Present,* p. 92-3 and much influenced by the work of Roger Manvell, first director of the British Film Academy and author of numerous books on film and cinema.
[448] Aldgate and Richards, *Britain Can Take It,* pp. 315-333.
[449] Rattigan, *This is England*, p. 96.

observation, many films on the navy were conservative in nature and promoted an establishment view, but this was not something simply emanating from an upper class elite as will be seen in the discussion of attitudes towards the navy.

There are two texts that look specifically at the navy on film during this period. Rayner places the films in the context of the naval film as a genre although the main focus of his book is not the Second World War.[450] McKenzie also examines the navy alongside the army and RAF with particular regard to the input of the services in film production.[451] Neither considers the legacy of films prior to the Second World War or the maritime sphere beyond the Royal Navy.

3. Overview of British Cinema and the Ministry of Information

By the beginning of the Second World War Britain could truly be described as a mass media society. In 1939, 69% of the population took a daily newspaper and 82% a Sunday paper.[452] Those in possession of a radio licence had increased from 10% just after the First World War to over 70%, and cinema audiences had nearly trebled since 1914.[453] The role that cinema would play had not been clearly defined although the potential power of film as a propaganda tool was well recognised.[454]

The scope for mass propaganda and the relay of information was larger than ever. It was recognised that there was a need for some mechanism for the central control of information and plans were put in place before the war to set up a Ministry of Information. The MoI had a considerable influence on the films that were made by the British film industry during the war, as they were responsible for co-ordinating and disseminating propaganda as well as for censorship. In addition to commissioning films, they had an impact upon commercial companies thanks to their partial control over the distribution of the limited resources available in wartime. While the MoI was the biggest influence on British produced films the majority

[450] Rayner, *The Naval War Film.*
[451] Mackenzie, *British War Films, 1939-1945.*
[452] Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda,* p. 37.
[453] Ibid., p. 37.
[454] *Report of a Committee appointed by the Board of Trade to consider the position of British Films,* (London: HMSO, 1936), Cmd. 5320, p. 4.

shown in cinemas came from America. During the Second World War approximately 75% of the films shown in Britain were Hollywood productions and most of these did not deal with war topics.[455]

Naval propaganda, like all propaganda during the war was not consistent or subject to a fixed policy, as Landy comments, 'there was no static and monolithic sense of wartime ideology, but that the ideology changed to suit changing circumstances.'[456] The policy for film propaganda remained fluid throughout the war and was only loosely defined. A general plan was drawn up in 1940 following a Policy Committee Paper written by Lord Macmillan (the Minister for Information at that point). It referred to newsreels which took priority in terms of the availability of film stock but the feature film was considered the most potentially useful way to put across 'British life and character' and 'British ideas and institutions'.[457] The primary consideration was to show 'what Britain is fighting for,' 'how Britain fights,' and 'the need for sacrifice if the war was to be won'.[458] It was thought that the use of British history would be an important aspect of the propaganda effort. In the event most of the films that took a historical stance were made either in the build-up or early part of the war and they were relatively few in number. There were no British made historical naval films produced during the war. Most of the films dealing with maritime matters had a contemporary setting and many of these used a documentary style. The influence of the documentary movement was perpetuated in particular when the GPO film unit became the Crown Film Unit in 1940 and became a major part of the propaganda machine for the MoI.

By far the biggest output of the MoI as a producer was the number of public information films that were shown in the reserved slots at the cinema and during events such as the Warship Weeks.[459] It should be noted, however, that in general they were less well distributed than newsreels.[460] The shorts were mainly centred on

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[455] Robert Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, p. 14.
[456] Landy, *British Genres*, p. 142.
[457] Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 251. Co-ordinating Committee Paper No.1, Programme for Film Propaganda, National Archives, Kew London (hereafter referred to as NA), Not dated, INF1/867.
[458] Ibid.
[459] Warship Weeks ran in 1941 and 1942 and were one of the National Savings Committee fundraising campaigns through which individual towns could 'adopt' a ship.
[460] Clive Coultass, 'British Feature Films and the Second World War', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 19 (1984), p. 9.

the MoI campaigns such as encouraging National Savings, anti-gossip, war work recruitment and Dig for Victory and maritime related films were used in almost all of these campaigns.[461] Many aspects of maritime activity were covered by the MoI shorts, newsreel trailers and a small number of full length features.[462] Over seventy-five of them dealt either exclusively or significantly with maritime matters.[463] Twenty-nine of the films dealt primarily with merchant or industrial related activity rather than the Royal Navy. This was important as these topics received far less attention in fictional treatments. The films also considered the work of the Allies' navies which otherwise received almost no recognition in feature film during the war and only limited attention in postwar film. Second World War cinema audiences would have found it difficult to avoid maritime related propaganda even if they chose not to see that genre of feature film.

The Admiralty was another potential agency for the production of film but was in fact a producer for only nine of the MoI films. As before the war Admiralty responses to commercial filmmaking were ad-hoc. Whilst they co-operated on most of the major naval features (other than comedies) the Admiralty was largely reactive rather than proactive in matters of publicity during the war.[464] There was however no shortage of other organisations sponsoring maritime based shorts including the National Savings Committee, the British Council and the Ministry of Labour. The Admiralty was the least active of the service departments in making films for public consumption, generally the most uncooperative with the media, and the most reticent in respect of official publications.[465] The Naval Film Unit, unlike the other services, was engaged almost solely with training films for internal use. Footage of the fleet seen in cinemas was invariably shot by commercial companies.[466] It was not until the end of the war that the Admiralty shifted in its approach to the media. For example the first time that any film record was made of the war by the Naval Film Unit was of the Normandy invasion in 1944. The Admiralty did not allow the BBC to broadcast interviews with

[461] See Appendix 4.
[462] Ibid.
[463] Not including those that were distributed overseas only.
[464] Victoria Carolan, *Voicing the Silent Service: The Image of the Navy on the Home Front 1939-1945* (Unpublished MA Thesis: University of Greenwich, 2002), pp. 70-89.
[465] On Official Publications see Anthony James, *Informing the People: How the Government won hearts and minds to win WW2* (London: HMSO, 1996), p. 57.
[466] Clive Coultass, *Images for Battle: British Film and the Second World War 1939-1945* (Canbury, N.J: Associated University Presses, 1989), p. 62.

naval personnel without a convoluted censorship process. This was still a problem in 1944: an issue that had been entirely solved with the Army and largely with the RAF by 1940.[467] Anthony James contends that the Admiralty was reluctant to involve itself in official pamphlets which were produced for public information by the MoI throughout the war, and sold cheaply to attract as wide an audience as possible:

> The PR success of the early pamphlets[468]were looked upon disdainfully by the Admiralty who saw them as naught but an unseemly scramble to curry favour amongst the uninformed and beneath the dignity of a service with a proper amount of tradition and self-confidence.[469]

This mirrored the attitude towards propaganda voiced by factions of the Admiralty during the First World War. Belatedly in 1942, after all the other service ministries the Admiralty produced a pamphlet with the MoI on *Ark Royal* written by 'Traffail' (Captain Henry Taprell Dorling) who had come out of retirement to join the MoI in 1939. Again the Admiralty was always more content to participate in publicity drives if they could use 'insiders'. As Lavery's work shows even in terms of recruitment publicity there were complaints that there was less advertising for the navy than the other services, with some peacetime posters on display in recruitment centres as late as 1942. Preference for the navy amongst conscripts, regardless, remained high and although it was outstripped by the RAF in the early part of the war, it was from 1941 onwards consistently first choice.[470]

4. Attitudes towards the Navy

For the first three years of the war more films were made about the Royal Navy than any of the other armed services.[471] This was partly because most of the news at the beginning of the war was navy related. Other cultural reasons may also, however, have played a part and historians have speculated on why it may have been the case. Chapman attributes this phenomenon to the 'traditional affection and respect in which Britain held the senior service' and to 'the nature of the war at sea which gave ample

[467] Victoria Carolan, *Voicing the Silent Service*, p. 39.
[468] The Air Ministry pamphlets *The Battle of Britain* (1941) and *Bomber Command* (1941) were both instant bestsellers.
[469] James, *Informing the People*, p.57.
[470] Lavery, *Hostilities Only*, pp. 30-32.
[471] Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 180.

scope for action and drama at a time when the British Army had not won any major victories'.[472] At a time when there was little positive news to report and the evacuation of Dunkirk had just taken place there was also a deliberate move on the part of the MoI to promote the navy. In June 1940 a Planning Committee paper suggested: 'For want of something better we shall have to plug (1) the Navy, (2) the Empire's strength and (3) what a hell of a fine race'.[473]

Confidence was high in the navy because it had for so long been the first line of defence and was still widely regarded as the best in the world. Notwithstanding the lack of army victories at the beginning of the war, stories about the navy were always going to be more reassuring. This could also be explained in terms of the findings of the previous chapters, that the navy had already become well established as representative of the nation on film.

Respect for the navy ran high and compared favourably with the other services. Mass Observation carried out a survey of 'Civilian Attitudes towards the Navy in Comparison with the RAF and the Navy' in 1941 which concluded that:

> 1. The Navy is less criticised than the other forces, even by very critical people.
> 2. The command of the Navy is more trusted than that of the other services.
> 3. The Navy is looked upon as a single unit with officers and men co-operating in the job in hand.
> 4. The personnel of the Navy is considered more worthy of respect than the other services because of the special dangers people consider sailors undergo.[474]

It can be assumed that to a considerable extent the favourable impression of the navy had been well established before the onset of war, thanks in part to the way that the navy was represented on film. As has been seen the Admiralty was slow in matters of propaganda and there was not a single co-ordinated policy towards the promotion of the navy. The war of course was a period of intense propaganda and other agencies such as the BBC and various ministries were seen to promote maritime interests with

[472] Ibid.
[473] INF 1/251, Planning Committee paper, 17 June 1940.
[474] Mass Observation Archives File Report 886-7 (Hereafter referred to as M-O FR) 'Civilian Attitudes to the Navy Compared with the RAF and Army' September 1941, p. 2.

poster campaigns, Warship Weeks, concerts and plays. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse these aspects in detail but it is important to note their presence went alongside film influencing public opinion of the navy. The popular perceptions of the navy shown in the survey may well have contributed to filmmakers' decisions to choose the navy as the focus of many of the early wartime productions in the cause of effective propaganda.

The conclusion that the navy was regarded as a 'single unit with officers and men co-operating in the job in hand' is particularly interesting in terms of the Second World War cinema, where co-operation between classes became a central theme of the propaganda movie. The RAF in comparison was considered a 'brilliant set of individuals,'[475] and the army was pictured as having a gulf between gallant men (though less intelligent than those in the RAF and navy) and incompetent commanders.[476] The idea of a close-knit unit in which those of low and high rank worked together with equal competency and equal exposure to danger was only perceived by the public surveyed to be an inherent aspect of the navy. Of course film propaganda tended to represent all the services as sharing these values but the fact that this was already an accepted part of the navy made it ideal as a propagandistic starting point. Rather like the 'fair shares for all' basis on which rationing was sold, the notion of such equal sacrifice sat comfortably in a society influenced by the remembrance of the First World War and in which social democratic values had become more influential in shaping public discourse and expectations of inter-class relations in the 1930s.

The Mass Observation report also noted one reason for the almost universal approval of the navy was the relative lack of information disseminated to the public in comparison to the other forces, and also because of naval tradition. Ironically, therefore, the Admiralty's inactive approach to propaganda seemed to actually have enhanced naval mystique. The factors drawn out in the Mass Observation survey are of particular relevance in consideration of the early wartime propaganda films.

[475] M-O FR886-7 p. 3.
[476] Ibid., p. 5.

5. *For Freedom* (1940)

For Freedom has been selected first, because its date of production allows a discussion of early war films and second, because of its unique setting. It was one of the films made at the beginning of the war when the naval film was particularly prominent. Unlike virtually all other Second World War naval it was made from the perspective of an outsider, in this case a newsreel company, looking at the navy, rather than from a naval perspective looking out. This section looks particularly at the discrepancy between the critically appreciative reception of the film at the time and recent literature which has tended to dismiss it.

5.1. Synopsis

The film begins in the offices of a newsreel company where a film charting the events leading up to the Second World War is being put together. The company owner, played by well-known comedian Will Fyffe, is cynical and acknowledges propaganda techniques through comedy as the newsreel is made. He expects war to be announced imminently, although his pacifist son convinces him to make a film that celebrates international human achievement rather than a film about conflict. When war breaks out the peace film is abandoned and the son leaves to go abroad after an altercation with his father. They are reconciled when the son is able to obtain footage of the German ship, *Graf Spee,* in Montevideo after the Battle of the River Plate. The second part of the film concentrates on reconstructions of the battle, the sinking of the merchant vessel *Africa Shell* and the fate of the prisoners taken aboard the German vessel *Altmark.* The film concludes with footage of Churchill's speech at the Guildhall to crew members of HMS *Ajax* and HMS *Exeter*, ships involved in the action against *Graf Spee*.

5.2 Background

For Freedom used a combination of fiction, documentary, diagrammatic representation and re-enactment. This form was already familiar in the cinematic

portrayal of the navy.[477] The veteran director of *For Freedom*, Maurice Elvey, had used similar techniques in his film of Nelson in 1919, which showed footage of the fleet, re-enacted scenes of Nelson, diagrams of actions and the fictional background of Admiral Sir Robert Fremantle (as himself) recounting naval history to a young boy. Also familiar were the scenes of victory when the ships return to their home ports near the end of the film. This comprised of a montage that included shots of the statue of Drake at Plymouth, The Houses of Parliament, Admiralty Arch from Trafalgar Square and the Royal Family. As has been seen in previous chapters, by the outbreak of the Second World War such images had become staples of a connected history of the nation and the sea, both within wider culture and specifically on screen.

Elvey was not a radical director, tending towards patriotism and acceptance of the status quo. He held a belief that making films that were representative of Britain was the only way to counteract competition from American producers.[478] Elvey was a life-long socialist and his left-wing politics and patriotism coexist in the film, reflected by its level of social and international inclusivity.[479] The film does not rely on a single viewpoint, but veers between news reporters from different nations, the British and German navies, and different ranks from within the Royal Navy.

5.3 Critical Reception

Recent historians, such as Murphy and Mackenzie,[480] have characterised *For Freedom* as a film dealing with the Battle of the River Plate and the *Altmark* incident[481] with a superficial, contrived back story that does not work. The film has been discounted for two reasons. First, aesthetically, the narrative is not satisfying and lacks plot. It is a film of two halves and the cohesion between them can appear one of expediency rather than design, especially since the integration between the two

[477] For example the fictional *Peril of the Fleet* (1909) based its story around footage of the assembled fleet at the 1909 Spithead Review, also *The Battle of Jutland, Zeebrugge* and *The Battles of Coronel and the Falkland Islands*.
[478] Linda Wood (ed.), *The Commercial Imperative in the British Film Industry: Maurice Elvey a Case Study* (London: BFI, 1987), p. 35
[479] Ibid., p. 55.
[480] See Murphy, *British Cinema and the Second World War*, pp. 19-20 and MacKenzie, *British War Films*, , p. 64-65.
[481] The *Altmark* was the supply vessel for *Graf Spee* and also held the survivors of vessels sunk by the *Graf Spee* as prisoners.

is not fully realised. Despite this flaw, this analysis will argue that in fact there is a thematic cohesion between them, apparent in the context of the film's production and release that has been underestimated. Second, the film suffers badly because of hindsight. It was made very early in the war, dealing with the actual incident of the Battle of the River Plate. Yet the later war was not one characterised by surface battle, and the optimism in the film engendered by this early success was misplaced. The press release for the premier hailed the Battle of the River Plate as 'the greatest British naval drama in history', and the film as one of commemoration, as a 'living monument to the Navy'.[482] Posterity has not accorded quite such significance to the battle, and while the film may stand as a testament to the navy it was, with the protracted Battle of the Atlantic to follow, neither representative nor crucial enough to be a meaningful monument.

Both of these problems were identified by contemporary reviews. The *New Statesman* reported that 'the battle scenes are tacked on to a sketchy story,'[483] and the *Times,* in a generally positive review remarked that, 'it might perhaps have been better if the film had not quite so obviously implied that all recent history leads up to this single battle'.[484] These views were, however, by no means universal. The film was one of only thirteen British films to make the *Kine Weekly's* list of successful films of 1940[485] and in general the film was enthusiastically received by contemporary reviewers. The *Daily Mirror* reported:

> Please don't complain that modern film productions are suffering from an overdose of sickly sentiment. Because this week you've the opportunity to see a marvellous piece of REAL life on screen. Fiction has never produced a more human and dramatic story than is told in *For Freedom*... this picture... is a thrilling and patriotic spectacle which combines propaganda and entertainment value...'[486]

[482] General Film Distributers Limited, Press Release, *'For Freedom: The Battle of the River Plate: Premier Presentation at the Gaumont, Haymarket'*, April 1940.
[483] 'For Freedom at the Gaumont', *New Statesman*, 20 April 1940.
[484] 'New Films in London: Battle of the River Plate', *Times*, 15 April 1940.
[485] Robert Murphy, 'The British Film Industry: Audiences and Producers', in Philip M. Taylor (ed.), *Britain and the cinema in the Second World War* (London: Macmillan, 1998), pp. 34-35.
[486] 'The Start', *Daily Mirror*, 12 April 1940.

The *Monthly Film Bulletin* in addition to referring to the film as 'a spectacular naval war drama,'[487]commented:

> The framework of this story is original, ingenious and appropriate. The result combines inspiring and thrilling spectacle with the unswerving regard for accuracy typical of documentary at its best. The events leading up to the war are effectively shown, and bitingly but not bitterly commented on by Will Fyffe, whose shrewd and pawky humour is exactly right and telling. The battles scenes are introduced and commented on by Vice Admiral Harper are breathtaking and unforgettable, and most impressively reconstructed. The telling has dignity, restraint and a set of values and proportion.[488]

The *Times* reviewer similarly reported:

> The survey makes use of the ingenious device of showing every event as it appears to those who work in a news-reel office in London and as it is reflected in the sturdy and English mind of the director of the news-reels, a part which Mr Will Fyffe plays with energy and conviction.[489]

These reviews beg the question of why the background story was then considered so 'ingenious' and 'appropriate,' whereas it is now considered a major fault of the film. This is essentially because the film is time bound, not only in the sense of not providing a historical perspective on the Battle of the River Plate, but also because it dealt with issues that were particularly pertinent in 1940: that is the public questioning of the reliability of the press (in print and in newsreel), and the lack of news in the early part of the war.

At this time the veracity of news reporting across the media and issues such as faked newsreels, a general lack of news and censorship were all under question. A memorandum sent to the Home Office compiled by the MoI noted that: 'It must be realised that large masses of people distrust the radio and a press which they know to be censored'.[490] Faith in the press had been particularly affected by the reporting of operations concerning the German invasion of Norway and Denmark. The true extent

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[487] 'For Freedom', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 7/76 (1940), p. 54.
[488] Ibid.
[489] 'New Films in London: Battle of the River Plate' *Times*, 15 April 1940.
[490] 'The Preservation of Civilian Morale', September 1939, HO 199/434 quoted in Ian McLaine, *Ministry of Morale: Home Front Morale and the Ministry of Information in World War II* (London: George Allen and Unwin 1979), p. 28.

of the disaster came as a great shock to people when it was revealed.[491] These points were backed up by the findings of a Mass Observation survey which reported a loss of confidence in news reporting in both newsreels and the press. One of the larger surveys taken just before war broke out showed that 84% of men and 89% of women were criticising the reliability and disinterestedness of the press.[492] Distrust had been building since news was withheld regarding the abdication of Edward VIII,[493] and this was exacerbated by the Stanhope incident of 1939.[494] Newsreels remained popular although the public remained sceptical of the propaganda content and heavy censorship.[495] The differing accounts printed of the treatment of prisoners rescued from the *Altmark* fuelled the debate still further.[496] Essentially there were discrepancies in the reporting of the severity of conditions on board. One of the most sensationalist reports in the *Sunday Pictorial* described the rescue as:

> freedom from a hell ship, freedom from a four-month confinement in stinking holds, freedom from Nazi brutality, from filthy tyranny, the humiliations, practised by men whose lust for cruelty mounts with the helplessness of their victims.[497]

It was not disputed that conditions had been harsh and elements of the report were true, although in comparison with other articles they appeared exaggerated. The *Times* in a report the following day, using quotes from prisoners, gave glimpses of more sympathetic treatment. For example rather than being confined for four months, a man held on the ship for eleven weeks was confined for only two of them. Another had tried to send an SOS message in a tin box to be thrown out with the slops and had been given solder to seal it by a German carpenter.[498] Mass Observation's publication *Us, Weekly Intelligence Service* noticed other variations in reporting such as the

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[491] Ibid,. p. 60.
[492] M-O FR126 Report on the Press, 1940, p. 4.
[493] Ibid., p. 4.
[494] Lord Stanhope gave a speech to naval ratings revealing very little other than that there would be further mobilisation but a 'D' notice was issued. All newspapers obeyed the notice other than the *Daily Sketch* which said, 'Both patriotism and public spirit demanded from us not the withholding of such a speech, but its frank, unfettered publication, accompanied by strong, clear explanations of what it really signified...we had, so it appeared to us, a clear duty to allay public anxiety at once'. M-O FR126 , p. 12.
[495] Ibid., p. 5.
[496] M-O FR343 'What People Think About the Press', August 1940.
[497] *Sunday Pictorial*, 18 February 1940.
[498] 'Hardship of the Prisoners', *Times*, 19 February 1940.

number of prisoners and food rations which they claimed became scantier in successive news articles.[499]

The scepticism towards commercial news was confronted head on in *For Freedom* through the figure of the newsreel company owner. Having seen the footage for the film he is making about the build up to war he comments cynically on propaganda clichés:

> All we want is a shot of Chamberlain saying war is inevitable, bung in a few battleships, then we'll have a band playing *Rule Britannia* and *Land of Hope and Glory*, then we'll push it in to every cinema in the country,

One of his workers suggests that they then have a Union Jack waving in the breeze, to which the owner quips: 'you know that's a very original idea – wonder that no-one ever thought of doing that before'.

To an extent the film opens up the process of newsreel making and the difficulties in attempting to anticipate news as well as sourcing appropriate footage. This, it can be surmised, was a deliberate propaganda effort to improve understanding of news production as the idea for the film came from the film's producer, Castleton Knight, who was also the editor of Gaumont British News.[500] Despite the obvious concern of the newsreel boss in the film to make money he is also seen to be scrupulous in obtaining genuine footage. The film as a whole goes to great lengths to strengthen its verisimilitude and plausibility. The latter part of *For Freedom* is mostly concerned with the reconstructions of the sinking of the merchant vessel *Africa Shell* by the *Graf Spee* and with the fate of the *Altmark* prisoners. Here the film emphasised its veracity as Captain Dove of the *Africa Shell* played himself in the reconstruction and many of the crew and *Altmark* prisoners were those who had been involved. The sequences of reconstructed parts are narrated by Admiral Harper[501] whose authority is underlined by the narrator who tells the audience that Harper is 'someone who is very qualified to give you the details'. The press release for the premier emphasised this fact and also pointed out that the battle with the *Graf Spee* 'was re-enacted in home waters,

[499] 'Sunday Papers on the Altmark', *Us, Weekly Intelligence Service,* 6 March 1940, p. 43.
[500] '*Exeter* and *Ajax* Men Star in Film', *Daily Express,* 26 February 1940.
[501] Vice Admiral John Ernest Troyte Harper (1874-1949), former Director of Navigation, Naval ADC to the King, retired 1929 and became Nautical Assessor to the House of Lords (1934-46). He compiled the official record of the Battle of Jutland.

officers and men of the *Ajax* and *Exeter* appearing before the cameras within twenty-four hours of their sighting Plymouth'.[502]

The newsreel narrator, a character in the film and seen on screen, was played by E.V.H Emmet. Emmet was familiar to the wartime audience as the real voice of Gaumont-British News. He also did the voice over for *The Lion has Wings*, although the use of his voice in that film, as an unseen authority, is very different. *The Lion has Wings* was presented *as* a newsreel documentary, rather than dramatising the *production* of such a film, and therefore appeared much more didactic than *For Freedom.* *For Freedom* showed the artifice behind newsreel making and questioned what should be included. This in turn facilitated a discursive element in its portrayal of events leading up to the war and positive aspects of international cooperation and attempts at peace (albeit with Britain emerging in the most positive light). The decision of whether to produce a peace film or not lighted upon an issue identified by Taylor that, 'The British idea that propaganda could be used as an instrument for the promotion of international goodwill was gradually giving way to a perhaps more realistic appraisal of its value as an instrument of defence in a world threatened by the possibility of war.'[503] Mass Observation surveys indicated that the appearance of Chamberlain on screen in the film elicited applause from some audiences.[504] This demonstrates that at this point in the war he still had a measure of popularity and the reflection on how Britain had entered war was a topic that still had some resonance with the public. The notion that war was a necessary evil turned to only after peaceful negotiations had failed was arguably a powerful unifying factor on the home front, and within the Empire, during the first nine months of the war.[505]

The navy, as the service that the public felt they knew least about, and yet respected most, was presented directly to the audience with the commentary of the re-enacted scenes given by Vice Admiral J. E. T. Harper. The straightforward approach of Harper's narrative was repeated in a MoI pamphlet entitled *The Battle of the River*

[502] General Film Distributors Limited, Press Release, 'For Freedom: The Battle of the River Plate', April 1940.
[503] Taylor, *British Propaganda in the Twentieth Century*, p. 83.
[504] 'Newsreel Report 2, 26 May 1940' in Richards and Sheridan (eds), *Mass Observation at the Movies*, p. 399.
[505] See David Dutton, *Neville Chamberlain* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2001), pp. 57-91 and also responses in M-O File Report Wartime Directive No.4, December 1939, pp. 2-3.

Plate also released in 1940. It was published without Admiralty co-operation and was made up simply with commanders' dispatches. This differed from previous publications on the army and air force which were written as histories with newspaper 'puff'.[506] As the Mass Observation survey discussed at the beginning of this chapter demonstrated, the public had most confidence in the navy and its leaders in comparison to the other services. The film used this confidence to lend credibility to the news reporters' version of events. In addition a Mass Observation report on newsreels in May 1940 showed that:

> The mainstays of the newsreels, the armed forces, still occupy by far the largest part of the total footage, though both army and RAF have suffered a little at the expense of the Navy. To the Navy there is an exceptionally high degree of response, 21 out of 39, or 55% of its appearance being clapped.[507]

The impact of the scenes reconstructed by naval personnel was greater than can be guessed at in looking at the film today. One reviewer considered them the 'newsreel counterpart' of the Henderson White Paper that had, in October 1939, disclosed shocking details of the treatment of prisoners in concentration camps under the Nazi regime.[508] The reconstructions were seen to give the 'truth' about the circumstances surrounding the *Altmark* which had been shown to be distorted in other media reporting. This aspect marked the film out from the other early wartime naval dramas.

5.4 Comparison with *The Lion has Wings*

Although the difference has not always been obvious to more modern viewers, at the time *For Freedom* was considered a step up from the propaganda films that had already been shown.[509] It invited particular comparison with the *Lion has Wings* (1939). This was because the two films were made around the same time, and because of similarities of production. In particular both relied heavily upon newsreel footage and reconstruction. More recent literature has also tended to lump them

[506] James, *Informing the People*, p. 57.
[507] M-O FR141, Newsreels (2), May 1940, pp. 3-4.
[508] *Exeter* and *Ajax* Men Star in Film', *Daily Express*, 26 February 1940
[509] For example the *New Statesman* commented that it was 'a considerable improvement on the *Lion has Wings...'* 20 April 1940.

together. As Chapman says of *For Freedom:* 'It now seems, rather like *The Lion has Wings*, something of a hodge-podge which includes aspects of fictional narrative and documentary reportage but does not succeed in integrating them successfully'.[510]

For Freedom does however manage the integration more successfully, and avoids the didacticism of *The Lion has Wings.* The first half of the film deals with the problems of making a newsreel and the second part gives examples of good practice, in that it is clear what is reconstructed footage and what is genuine. In the *Lion has Wings* the fiction and actuality footage are merged without any indicators of what is original footage and what is reconstructed. The reconstructions in the film, moreover, are there to introduce fictional characters for human interest in the film, and consequently have an entirely different purpose to those in *For Freedom.* Neither does it demonstrate different points of view. During fictional scenes in *For Freedom* examples are given of British, American and German radio reports of the same event although predictably with the German report being the most obviously unreliable.

The use of similar techniques in the two films and a lack of attention to how they were employed and from whose point of view have masked the relative complexity of *For Freedom.* It is an excellent example, in fact, of why historians should not always concentrate analysis upon films that receive later critical accolades or enjoy popular longevity. *For Freedom* probably benefited in box office returns because it was released at a point when audiences were eager for more news, there was particular interest in the *Altmark* and they were not yet fatigued with war propaganda, rather than because it was a great film. The ambition of the film is to a certain extent lost in execution. The plot does not satisfactorily carry the film's more complex concepts. It did however go some way to satisfying particular concerns at that very specific moment. The message of the film was just as much about the quality of the news as the strength of the Royal Navy. Its pay off was that it acknowledged the nature of propaganda and the problems that faced those producing the news. No matter how well the navy performed in the battle arena or how well it was portrayed on film, much propaganda intent would be lost if there was no confidence in news reporting. By exploring this issue, the film acknowledged the relative sophistication of its

[510] Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 181.

audience and the way in which many of them engaged with newsreels. All other predominately naval films of the war took a narrower perspective, looking within ships and crews themselves. The idea that *For Freedom* was the newsreel counterpart of the Henderson White Paper, however, indicates the power that film could have in shaping the perception of the navy during wartime.

Although Richards' seminal work on *Ships With Wings*, which demonstrated the success of the film in terms of audience reaction, was published over twenty years ago, there has been surprisingly little substantial reappraisal of the early war films in terms of their effectiveness.[511] The lack of detailed interrogation of these films may be in part due to the acceptance of the fact that the MoI had a shaky start and the residue of the idea represented by the misguided '*Your* Courage, *Your* Cheerfulness, *Your* Resolution, Will Bring *Us* Victory' poster: that is that the MoI was out of touch with the populace.[512] These factors, in conjunction with the evidence of the criticism levelled at the MoI by the film industry that they had no clear direction or policy at the beginning of the war, led Reeve's to conclude that because it took some time for policy to be implemented that:

> ...the delay was critical...First it meant that the people worked their way through the most difficult period of the war without the support of appropriate propaganda, and secondly and in no small part in direct consequence, appropriate film propaganda (when it was finally produced) was designed to reinforce and strengthen ideas that that were already well established.

The evidence of *For Freedom* demonstrates that this was not the full story- there was effective propaganda from some quarters in the early part of the war. While the production may have been somewhat ad-hoc in that it was hastily put together this did mean that it was released at a point when it was still relevant to the audience. Whether *For Freedom* is an isolated case needs further investigation. As the other case studies will also show, however, moments of release were crucial. To maximise effectiveness they had to coincide with public feeling, and even the advantage of longer term planning could not always mitigate against events which rapidly shifted public opinion. It is doubtful that the slow, unorganised start was responsible for

[511] Jeffrey Richards, 'Wartime British Cinema and Audiences and the Class System: the case of *Ships With Wings* (1941)', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 7/2 (1987), pp. 129-141.
[512] See for example Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 18 and Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda*, pp. 140-141.

films simply reiterating well established ideas: *Western Approaches* (1944), for example was planned to be released much earlier but was beset with unavoidable problems in production. As a result it finally came out at a point when audiences were largely fatigued with wartime subjects. The following case studies of two official films about Dunkirk underline how swiftly public opinion could shift.

6. Dunkirk Spirit

'Dunkirk spirit' has entered the language as a shortcut referring to British community spirit, meeting difficulties with stoicism and the ability to succeed against the odds. It is frequently evoked by journalists and politicians either in bolstering morale in difficult circumstances or in bemoaning its loss. This section looks at two official films: the short fictional *Channel Incident* and the documentary short *The Little Ships of England* in the context of the then evolving myth of Dunkirk. The films have been chosen to compare the way that cinematic propaganda about Dunkirk was presented to the public in 1940 and later in 1943. As has been discussed, films in general that were produced during the second half of the war increasingly reflected the theme of mass mobilisation as part of the 'People's War' and elements of this shift are discernable between the two films. The new construction of Britain on film owed much to the mythic summer of 1940 with the triptych of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and the Blitz, which have attracted an increasing body of academic work in the context of myth, memory and national identity. This section now turns to this extraordinary period of mythologisation.[513]

6.1 The Myth of Dunkirk

As the necessity of retreat from France became more likely in May 1940, measures were taken to limit the potential damage to morale on the Home Front. The Government feared that the collapse of Belgium, Holland and France and the consequent rumours of chaos caused by Fifth Columnists would spread panic and

[513] For example: Angus Calder *The Myth of the Blitz*, Angus Calder, *The People's War*, Smith, *Britain and 1940*; Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Connelly, *We Can Take It!*.

despondency in the UK.[514] Badsey has demonstrated how reporting of the campaign in France before evacuation was carefully constructed to maintain morale on the Home Front. The flow of news was limited by the desire for positive reports from the British and by stringent French censorship which resulted in most of the journalists leaving the arena before the evacuation took place.[515] When it came to the reporting of the evacuation itself Badsey comments, 'the correspondents loyally did their job, promoting a view of the Dunkirk evacuation that they had not themselves witnessed as being a British triumph'.[516] This view quickly became one of a reiteration of British identity rather than one of a British retreat.

Some of the most enduring sentiments of Dunkirk were famously expressed in the Postscripts broadcast made by J.B. Priestley on 5 June 1940 just days after the evacuation. His broadcasts attracted a vast audience cited to be at least a third of the country.[517] There were two major strands of Priestley's broadcast, first that Dunkirk was a peculiarly 'English' epic in its 'folly and grandeur', and secondly his emphasis on the 'little boats' rather than the warships.

Priestley suggested that the evacuation had 'an inevitable air about it - as if we had turned a page in history of Britain and seen a chapter headed "Dunkirk".' This suggested that this disaster turned to a triumph already fitted Britain's self-perception of her history and psyche. Connelly expertly traces the elements of the myth and how the configuration of Dunkirk touched upon many pre-existing aspects on national identity configured in the nineteenth century.

> The basic thrust of the iconography of nationality was that Britain had evolved by seeing off all sorts of threatening foreigners and had heroically withstood moments of intense peril. Combined with this was a celebration of the fact that it had been achieved by a very small island indeed.[518]

Reporting in the popular press drew comparison with past historic episodes when Britain had found herself fighting alone, most notably in maritime terms against the

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[514] See Smith, *Britain and 1940*, p. 30.
[515] Stephen Badsey, 'British High Command and the Reporting of the Campaign', in Bond and Taylor (eds), *The Battle for France and Flanders*, pp. 139-143.
[516] Ibid, p. 153.
[517] John Baxendale, *Priestley's England: J. B. Priestley and English Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 140.
[518] Connelly, *We Can Take It!*, p. 57.

Armada and at Trafalgar.[519] History had taught Britain that 'triumph came after periods of desperate peril and when others had written them off'.[520] The idea that she was better off in 'splendid isolation' was endorsed by the oft quoted remarks of the King, 'Personally, I feel happier now we have no allies to be polite to and to pamper'.[521] According to Home Intelligence even before the evacuation attitudes towards the French were mostly negative, and there had never been a 'nation-wide feeling of affection and brotherliness'.[522] There was also evidence of the way that Dunkirk both elicited national pride and private comfort, for example as Nella Last wrote in her diary on 5 June 1940:

> The story made me feel part of something that was undying and never old – like a flame to light or warm, but strong enough to burn and destroy trash and rubbish. … somehow I felt everything to be worthwhile, and I felt glad I was of the same race as the rescuers and rescued.[523]

Although these views were not universally subscribed to, there was for example criticism of Priestley's broadcast by those who found it 'too romantic', or 'too unreal'[524] there did appear to be a general willingness to accept the spin on events. In terms of morale Mass Observation reported as early as June 1940 that, 'As a result of Dunkirk people are encouraged to try, in situations apparently hopeless'.[525]

Priestley's second enduring image was that of the 'the little ships' which captured the nation's imagination and reinforced self perceptions of British character. Again Connelly illuminates how this myth was easily assimilated to pre-existing ideas;

> It was easy to mythologise the little ships, for as with every aspect of 1940 it appealed to a world of inherited culture and iconography. Everyone knew the hulking galleons of the Spanish Armada had been fought off by much smaller ships. Everyone knew Britannia ruled the waves and the British know 'there is nothing – absolutely nothing half so much fun as simply messing about in boats'.[526]

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[519] See Ibid., pp. 59-63.
[520] Ibid., p. 59.
[521] Quoted in Ibid, p. 63.
[522] H.I. Daily Report, 24 May 1940 INF 1/264 quoted in McLaine, *Ministry of Morale*, p. 73.
[523] Richard Broad and Suzie Fleming, (eds), *Nella Last's war: A mother's diary, 1939-45* (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1996), p. 54.
[524] M-O FR173 'Morale Today', 6 June 1940, p. 2.
[525] M-O FR165 'Notes on Present Morale Situation and Morale Today', 3 June 1940, p. 5.
[526] Ibid., p. 73.

What was important here was the perception of civilian participation, regardless of the fact that most of the small craft were sailed by the Royal Navy rather than their owners.[527] The combined effort of the military and civilian was a powerful image in the emerging notion of 'The People's War': the idea of the whole nation co-operating against a common enemy and the ordinary man as hero. In the months following Dunkirk, the representations of the Battle of Britain and the Blitz further reinforced and developed the perception of British stoicism, spirit and determination against impossible odds.[528] Smith suggests that this narrative was all the stronger because it was also able to admit the desperation of Britain's situation:

> ...the interconnecting metanarrative of Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and the Blitz – actually admits many of the mistakes but includes them, as a counterpoint in a more heroic story. In spite of the ineptitude, Britain survived; the People's War over came the Guilty Men and Britain fought alone when the odds were stacked heavily against her being able to do so.[529]

6.2. *Channel Incident* (1940)

The film begins with the Admiralty calling a local yacht club with a request for small sailing craft to assist in the evacuation of troops from the beaches at Dunkirk. The only vessel available is a motor yacht *The Wanderer*. It is taken out by the wife of its owner who is in France with the BEF. She disguises herself as a man and is accompanied by the elderly ex-naval bartender and a mute youth. On the way they are also joined by a soldier. Once at Dunkirk they make repeated trips to transport soldiers from the beach to a large cruiser until they are exhausted, but still carry on. The woman makes numerous enquiries about her husband to no avail. They are shot at by enemy aircraft and the soldier attempts to retaliate with his Bren gun but is eventually killed himself. When there are no further men to pick up they return home. Once back in Britain the woman finds her husband amongst the wounded.

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[527] This is incorporated in to the 1958 film *Dunkirk* (Leslie Norman): when the Admiralty try to requisition ships the owners insist on participating themselves.
[528] These have analysed at length elsewhere- see for example Connelly, *We Can Take It!* and Smith, *Britain and 1940.*
[529] Smith, *Britain and 1940,* p. 30.

The MoI made *Channel Incident* to commemorate rescue from Dunkirk and it was released in September 1940. The nine-minute film intended as a tribute and destined for propaganda purposes in the United States as well as the UK, provoked a vitriolic attack in the *Documentary News Letter*:

> Such a film should have appeared very soon after Dunkirk, or should have been reserved till much later, when an epic event could be honoured in more peaceful retrospect...It is a flaming insult to the men of Dunkirk and to the men and women of the little boats, a flaming insult indeed to the British people, to reduce this great story to the terms of a middle-class female chuntering back and forth across the Channel and rescuing soldiers only incidentally while she searches for her husband. To add insult to injury, one of the crew of her motor-boat is quite gratuitously depicted as a half-wit. If ever a film symbolised the mental outlook by which Britain could lose this war, *Channel Incident* did it; and it was splendid to note the disgust, either frigid or vocal, with which it was received by many in the public cinemas.[530]

The indictment needs to be taken with a pinch of salt. The *Documentary News Letter* had a left-wing bias, and as Richards' essay on *Ships with Wings* demonstrates, working-class audiences were not necessarily antipathetic to middle-class representations on screen.[531] There are scant resources for judging public reaction to the MoI shorts, with the exception of Mass Observation surveys, as most of them were not reviewed in the newspapers. An American review, however, indicates that the negative audience reactions may also have been provoked by the quality of the film: 'The short contains actual Dunkirk battle scenes but these are few. The rest are acted, and in the manner of amateur theatricals'.[532] In addition a Mass Observation report on MoI films in 1941 did not bear out universal disapproval in the UK: it showed that out of fifty films mentioned it came eighth in terms of receiving the most praise.[533] One man commented that it was 'unusually dramatic and sincere'.[534]

Documentary News Letter's attack on *Channel Incident* argued that the film did not adequately represent the myth specifically as it had been constructed by Priestley: '...*Channel Incident* is about THEM, and they're a miserable section of the citizenry whose Sunday-night castigation by Priestley partly sum up what we feel about

[530] 'Films and a People's War', *Documentary News Letter*, November 1940, p. 3.
[531] Richards, *Britain can Take It*, pp. 315-334.
[532] 'Channel Incident', *Motion Picture Herald*, 25 January 1941.
[533] 'Ministry of Information Films', MO-File Report 799, 1941, p. 2.
[534] 'Ministry of Information Shorts', MO-File Report, 1193, April 1942 p. 11.

them'.[535] Although this may not have concerned the overall audience as much as it did the left-wing literati, the film concerned privileged members of society and not the ordinary working sailors of Priestley's paddle steamers: 'These 'Brighton Belles' and 'Brighton Queens' left that innocent foolish world of theirs to sail into the inferno, to defy bombs, shells, magnetic mines, torpedoes, machine-gun fire - to rescue our soldiers'.[536]

As the growing notion of the People's War became entrenched in the national psyche it also became entwined with ideas of greater democracy and 1940 began to be seen as a 'turning point of British history, when the prejudices of the Victorian and Edwardian era, still felt to hold sway in the 'locust years' of the 1920s and 1930s... were swilled away in a new spirit of national consensus'.[537] The key tenet of this consensus was community. The world of exclusive yacht clubs was not in this spirit. The fact that the woman's husband was in the BEF, which might have been seen as representative of the hardships on all family members, both military and civilian, backfired. Her contribution was undermined as an image because her willingness to go was not selfless and marked her privilege in having access to a yacht with which to instigate that search. Priestley's version had taken hold and continued to gain momentum and it was this narrative that was more fully embraced in official film three years later.

6.4 *The Little Ships of England* (1943)

The documentary begins in the Cornish village of Polperro as the sun rises and the fishermen take to their boats. The narrator explains how it was the little ships that answered the call for assistance at Dunkirk and the film shows reconstructed scenes of men escaping the beaches on a small craft. The film then turns to need for wood for shipbuilding and the challenge to the timber industry. The transportation, preparation and delivery of timber is followed to a small West Country shipyard where a foreman shows a young lad around the works on his first day. The construction of wooden

[535] 'Films and a People's War', Documentary *News Letter, November* 1940, p. 3.
[536] J. B. Priestley, quote from *Postscripts* broadcast 5 June 1940, BBC.
[537] Smith, *Britain and 1940*, p. 4.

ships for minesweepers is shown. A boat from the yard is then seen in service in air sea rescue as an airman is plucked from the sea after bailing out of his plane.

Unfortunately it has not been possible to find documentation of audience reactions or reviews of the film. It was sponsored by the British Council who had a remit to promote British culture abroad, but also had a home division. From 1940 onwards the Council held official responsibility for the education and cultural welfare of allied civilians and merchant seamen and was actively developing connections with the armed forces.[538] From the listing in *Today's Cinema* it appears that the film was distributed in the UK.[539] What, however, is significant about the film is the way that it now incorporated the myth of Dunkirk into a wider pattern of British[540] endeavour, and small traditional industries that relied on the skill and commitment of the ordinary worker. Moreover it linked this with the British landscape referencing harbours, hills and woodland. The title of the film was of course a direct reference to the little ships at Dunkirk.

The film opens by giving a sense of an unchanging world as church bells ring in the picturesque fishing village with the commentary:

> The sun rises over an English harbour, each day the rising sun looks down on the same scene and with each dawn hard-handed, weather beaten men follow the winding lanes that their fathers and grandfathers knew down to the sea to fish. They in their boats discharge a simple duty but from time to time they sail into the pages of English history on another and higher mission. Twice have the little ships of England left their nets and their lobsterpots ashore and sailed the seas for bigger gain: once when the beacons flashed the news of the great Armada and again they sailed three hundred years later to the beaches of Dunkirk. Tired men gathered on the bullet-swept sands while the little ships: fishing boats, yachts, motor boats, barges canoes: anything that floated steamed to the rescue.

[538] Ali Fisher, 'A Story of Engagement: The British Council 1934-2009', www.britishcouncil.org/new/aboutus/ourhistory/ [Accessed 20 February 2011], p. 23.
[539] 'Little Ships of England', *Today's Cinema,* 61/4927 (1943).
[540] 'The film is entirely focussed on southern England but like many of the other short films also uses 'Britain' interchangeably with England.

The reconstructed scenes at Dunkirk, as well as the commentary, totally eclipse the Royal Navy as a part of the evacuation.[541] Enemy craft are seen repeatedly firing over the soldiers on the beaches and the sea is empty but for a single small craft that begins to pick up the men. The ability and availability of the little ships to get to Dunkirk at all is then linked to shipbuilding: 'Just as the fishermen answered the call to Dunkirk so the age old craft of shipbuilding rose to the national call'. This reference was to the building of traditional wooden ships rather than the steel constructions of the Northern yards and so the film moves to rustic scenes of woodcutting:

> On Britain's hillsides and in her woods the sound of axes echoed. When the demand for wooden ships and indeed timber for all sorts suddenly became urgent a tremendous burden was placed on an old but tiny industry. Now oak was needed for the frames and planks of new fleets and elm for their fittings.

This part of the commentary could equally have applied to a documentary about Trafalgar, although this is followed by demonstrating how the industry had to become increasingly mechanised in wartime. Wooden shipbuilding was neglected in most portrayals of the industry, but the Admiralty did commission smaller craft such as minesweepers and motor torpedo boats from small yards in Devon and Cornwall. The yard itself is represented in way similar to the shorts representing the northern yards in terms of tradition and passing on skills through generations. It is only at this point that the film directly links the building of ships to the naval requirements of the current war. In the last scenes, as an airman is rescued from the sea, the character of the Briton is emphasised:

> Think of it, the long flight with a burning plane, a two thousand foot parachute jump into an icy sea in half a gale, but he can still smile. For them it is just another job done, but a great job, and one of the many that are being tackled day and night by Britain's little ships.

[541] Summerfield contends that from 1940 there was a 'contest' as to how Dunkirk would be remembered, either as emblematic of the 'people's war' in Priestley's democratic terms or as a Royal Navy triumph as indicated in Churchill's speech which was 'militaristic and imperial' discussed in, Penny Summerfield, 'Dunkirk and the Popular Memory of Britain at War, 1940-58', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 45/4 (2010), pp. 788-811.

There was a tension within the film between presenting a rural idyll and an industrial capacity cable of true preparedness for war. This is linked to Weiner's observations referring to the early twentieth century that:

> The resulting conflicts of social values –progress versus nostalgia, material growth versus moral stability – were expressed in the two widespread and contrasting cultural symbols of Workshop and Garden...Was England to be the Workshop of the World or a Green and Pleasant Land?[542]

The film attempts to rationalise both, and imbeds the myth of Dunkirk into both potentially conflicting views of national identity. It also shows how accepted the integration of the Dunkirk experience into history and as a natural aspect of British character had become by 1943. Its argument was that the deliverance of Dunkirk was made possible by whole communities of ordinary workers and not by individual acts of the privileged few and thus was firmly rooted in the idea of 'The People's War'. By the time that *The Little Ships of England* came out, the mythic and complex position of Dunkirk within the multi-faceted national identities which co-existed during the war had already been apparent in the most well-known naval film of the period.

7. *In Which We Serve* (1942)

In Which We Serve has been chosen for analysis because of the perception of the film as the definitive naval drama of the Second World War. This section looks at the genesis of the production and argues that although it is generally discussed at far greater length than usual for films of the period few conclusions have been drawn from this. It suggests that the significance of the input of Louis Mountbatten and the character of Noël Coward in the making of the film have been overlooked. This is followed by an outlining of the critical receptions of the film both at the time and by recent historians and considers how the timing of the release was an important aspect of its success. The final section looks at wartime productions made after *In Which We Serve* with particular reference to *San Demetrio London.*

[542] Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit*, p. 6.

7.1. Synopsis

In Which We Serve is a fictionalised portrayal of the operations of HMS *Kelly* captained by Lord Louis Mountbatten. In the film the ship, renamed HMS *Torrin*, is sunk by a dive-bomber at the Battle of Crete. The story is then told in flashback through the thoughts of the three main characters, Captain Kinross, Chief Petty Officer Walter Hardy and Able Seaman Shorty Blake, as they wait for rescue clinging to a raft. The film details their experiences from the commissioning of the ship at the beginning of the war.

Each character is seen in their own homes as well as at Christmas time celebrating with their families. Captain Kinross (who is not an impersonation of Mountbatten but intended to be a more representative naval captain) is seen to lead an upper middle class life in the country with his wife and children. He spends Christmas aboard the ship with the other officers and their partners. Hardy, lower middle class, is married to Kath and they live together with her mother in Bristol. Blake is a working class Londoner who lives with his mother.

Aircraft attack the survivors on the raft and when Blake is injured he is seen remembering meeting Frida (Hardy's niece) on a train. Later they marry and she goes to live with Kath and her mother, now in Plymouth, while the men are at sea. A young stoker, one of the survivors on the raft, recalls deserting his post during the battle. The Captain, feeling that he was also culpable for this act of cowardice in having failed to impart his expectations to the inexperienced sailor, forgives him. Back on shore the sailor goes alone to a pub and gets drunk in trying to deal with his guilt.

The *Torrin* is seen to take part in operations at Dunkirk and transports troops back to Britain. In the meantime Plymouth is blitzed and both Kath Hardy and her mother lose their lives. Shorty receives the news by letter while onboard the ship, and also learns that he and Frida have a son.

The raft is attacked again before the survivors are picked up and the stoker is fatally injured. The ship that rescues them has on board approximately eighty of their

shipmates who have also been plucked from the sea. Once back on land Kinross takes his leave from his shipmates wishing them each well as they are detailed to different vessels.

7.2 Background

The genesis of *In Which We Serve* is more discussed by historians than that of any other Second World War film.[543] The story of Noël Coward's mission to help the war effort, his friendship and inspiration from Louis Mountbatten for the film, the various controversies surrounding Coward and the reservations of the MoI about the plot of the film are well known and have been discussed at length by Aldgate and Richards.[544] The point here is not to repeat that story but to look at what can be drawn from it. This section will consider two main elements: first the influence of Mountbatten in propelling the film into production and second the controversy over whether it was desirable for Coward to play a naval captain.

The effect of Mountbatten's influence on the film cannot be underestimated. From the evidence provided by Aldgate and Richards it is clear that Mountbatten was able to push aside every objection to the film from the MoI.[545] They conclude from this that it was possible for the services to make the films that they wanted make without recourse to the Ministry.[546] This, however, was not relevant in terms of the Admiralty. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter they were reactive rather than proactive in terms of publicity and there is no indication that there were films that they wanted to produce regardless of whether it was possible or not. It was not until late 1942 that the Admiralty began to take the co-ordination of publicity more seriously. Lord Bruntisfield, the Parliamentary Secretary, having formed a committee on naval publicity recommended the formation of a separate Naval Information Department which was instigated in 1943.[547] The Admiralty were willing to back Mountbatten rather than actively override the MoI. The case of *In Which We Serve* was an

[543] See Aldgate and Richards, *Britain can Take It,* pp. 185-217 and Mackenzie, *British War Films*, pp. 72-81.
[544] Aldgate and Richards, *Britain Can Take It,* pp. 187-201.
[545] Ibid., p. 199.
[546] Ibid., p. 196.
[547] McKenzie, *British War Films 1939-1945,* p. 88.

exceptional one involving an officer with particularly high connections. Almost certainly the more significant effect was the pre-publicity that the controversy attracted to the film. In addition it was probably seen by more establishment figures than the average wartime drama. For example it was shown as the after dinner entertainment by the King and Queen when Eleanor Roosevelt visited London.[548]

Coward's profile also added to the publicity around the film although he was a divisive character. Just as the reviews of his performance divided audience opinion so did his public persona.[549] One of the controversies largely purported through the *Daily Express* newspaper, surrounding the film before it was made was whether it was appropriate for Noël Coward to play a naval captain. Back in 1940 there had been an article in the *Sunday Pictorial* accusing civilians of inappropriately wearing military uniform. Noël Coward was included in the list for wearing naval uniform and further derided for his supposed role at the MoI which the paper saw merely as 'entertaining the troops'.[550] A visit to the United States prompted questions in Parliament as to under whose authority he was there. Some felt that he was not an ideal figure to promote British causes abroad as reported in the *Times*: 'Is the Minister aware that this gentleman does not appeal to democracy in America and does not represent democracy in this country, and is doing more harm than good; and will he bring him back to this country?'[551]

When the news broke that Coward would be taking the part of the Captain in a new naval film the *Daily Express* questioned whether it was right 'to have a professional actor dressed in the peaked cap and gold braid of a British naval officer'.[552] The argument was that the 'authenticity' and success of *Target for Tonight* (1941) was achieved with the use of genuine RAF personnel. In addition the performance of Admiral Sir Harry Harwood in a reconstruction of the *Graf Spee* action[553] was praised as 'the best thing of the war'.[554]

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[548] Eleanor Roosevelt, 'My Day', *Daily Express,* 26 October 1942.
[549] Reviews are detailed in the next part of this section.
[550] Aldgate and Richards, *Britain Can Take It*, pp. 189-90.
[551] 'Mr Noël Coward', *Times,* 7 August 1940, quoting Edgar Granville Liberal MP for Eye.
[552] Jonah Barrington, 'The Battle of Noël for Lead in Lord Louis Film', *Daily Express,* 17 September 1941.
[553] It is unclear what film this refers to as Harwood is uncredited in *For Freedom* and does not give either a substantial or notable performance. Captain Dove of the *Africa Shell* did however give a

Certainly the article in the *Daily Express* was of a personal nature and indeed Coward saw it as a vendetta.[555] There is, however, an important wider discussion brought out by the treatment of Coward in the press. First, some considered it undignified for a civilian to don the uniform of a naval captain if they were not perceived to have a character that was congruent with the ideals of British servicemen. Many other actors had of course played naval officers in films without press criticism. The idea, however, that Coward's character as a flippant upper-class playboy was not appropriate to represent British virtues had already been questioned during his trip to the United States. Second, there was a set of perceived ideal British characteristics, although it was one without consensus since not everyone agreed that Coward was an inappropriate choice. The representation of naval officers in literature and film had been continually used to express what were seen as the virtues of British character: who was entitled to the title of captain was a discussion that had persisted since the old argument over gentlemen and tarpaulins. The cap did not fit Coward's reputation. Third, there was an implication that there was a demand for more realistic portrayals on screen, which ironically *In Which We Serve* did provide.

Both contemporary and recent reviews of the film remain divided over whether Coward pulled off the role. What has been missed is the point that the precedents in film and literature of the representations of naval officers in non-comic roles gave rise to certain expectations. He was expected to embody virtuous British traits. Naval characters who did not measure up could expect the disproval of the others within and if they repented would most often die a heroic death. For example this was the fate of Lieutenant Cranford in *Convoy* after an incident with the Captain's wife**. A** similar plot convention was extended to the ordinary seaman, whereby those who displayed traits such as cowardice or selfishness were licked into shape under the guidance of the navy. This is seen in *In Which We Serve* through the Captain's care of the Young Stoker. In *San Demetrio London,* 'Yank' under the influence of the British crew becomes a team player and is ultimately considered an honorary 'Englishman.'

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spirited performance in a prominent role which was well received at the time, and it is possible that this is the example to which the reviewer intended to refer.

[554] Jonah Barrington, *Daily Express*, 17 September 1941.

[555] Coward insisted that he was not going to 'impersonate' Mountbatten and that the *Express* was 'out to get him'. *Daily Express*, 25 September 1941.

Although *San Demetrio London* was one of the few depictions of the Merchant Navy in war time, just as was seen in the case of shipbuilding films the rhetoric was congruent with depictions of the Royal Navy.

Coward in fact gave a very straight rendition of the paternalistic naval captain, perhaps partly because of the discussion before the film. Kinross is perhaps a little too worthy, as one audience member commented in a Mass Observation survey: '...the Capt. was too perfect to be real. The best humans have some small failings'.[556]

7.3 Reception

Although there was not universal approval, *In Which We Serve* enjoyed immediate success when it was released, topping contemporary opinion polls as the most popular British film in 1943.[557] It won critical approval in the United States being chosen as the best film of the year by the National Board of Review of Motion Pictures[558] and Coward was awarded a special Oscar for 'outstanding production achievement' in 1942. In 1943 it was nominated for two more Oscars.[559]

Reviews praised almost every aspect of the film, from its subject, its propaganda value as well as the script and the actors. The *Monthly Film Bulletin Review* is largely representative of the comments that were made on the film:

> The theme of this film is in itself of the highest standard and the very expert scripting of the story makes its development more than worthy of the theme...Under the quite outstanding direction of Noël Coward, who, amazingly, also sustains admirably the leading role of Captain "D" and is also responsible for the very effective musical score, a brilliant cast, including John Mills as Shorty, Bernard Miles as Walter, achieves the unique distinction of complete submersion of their own personalities in that of their respective characterisations all the time... This is, to my mind, the finest war drama produced yet and because of the strength of its understatement and recognition

[556] Ibid., p. 257.
[557] From '1943 Directive Replies on Favourite Films' and *Kinematograph Weekly* figures in Richards and Sheridan (eds), *Mass Observation at the Movies*, 1987, p. 220.
[558] 'Telegrams in Brief', *Times*, 29 December 1942.
[559] Best Picture and Best Screenplay.

> occasionally of human weakness is propaganda of the very best sort. It should be seen by all.[560]

Likewise from the *Observer*:

> Each [of the characters] is in the truest sense a 'supporting' player completing a pattern of noble and well-balanced proportions. The star is the ship...Coward has given us one of the most heart-warming, heart stirring films this country has ever produced at peace or in war.[561]

Where there was criticism it mostly focussed on Coward himself:

> ...*In Which We Serve* is far too long, too much centred upon Mr. Coward... Too many speeches to the crew, too many Christmas gatherings, and tear-jerks all in a row. *In Which We Serve* has not escaped the alloy of staginess – chiefly in the *Cavalcade* touch that makes parts of the film a succession of sentimental occasions, and in the person of Mr. Coward himself. He has chosen to depict Captain 'D' as a man always on duty who never smiles. This doesn't suit Mr. Coward; and when the Captain's wife says 'What a disagreeable man I've married,' one is inclined to agree. Captain 'D' - except for some moments at the end – is a figure of pasteboard.[562]

Opinions from Mass Observation surveys largely reflected those of the critics: a generally enthusiastic approval of the film and an appreciation of the depiction of the different class types, for example: 'I thought this a great work, chiefly because the characters were very true to human life; each was representative of a class type. The dialogue was excellent'.[563] Where there were negative comments they were again mostly directed at Coward, for example: 'Noël Coward spoiled it. I was never once able to forget that I was watching Noël Coward, an actor, and not a naval officer'.[564]

7.4 Recent Analysis

The critical reaction to the film has been well recorded by historians, and it has been perceived as a defining moment in Second World War cinema. In the words of

[560] 'In Which We Serve', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 9/107 (1942), p. 142.
[561] C. A. Lejeune, 'In Which We Serve', *Observer*, 27 September 1942.
[562] 'In Which We Serve', *New Statesman*, 26 September 1942.
[563] '1943 Directive Replies on Favourite Films', in Richards and Sheridan, *Mass Observation at the Movies*, p. 222.
[564] Ibid., p. 233.

Chapman, for example: 'the definitive tribute to the Royal Navy and arguably the finest film made about the services during the war'.[565] This is partly because it has been seen to represent some of the key shifts identified by historians that occurred in cinematic presentation during at this time. First, as Chapman notes, along with a handful of films such as *San Demetrio London*, *Millions Like Us* and *The Way to the Stars* (1945), *In Which We Serve*:

> exemplified the qualities of which the dominant critical discourse approved: realist treatment, sober narratives, and characterisations based on stoicism and emotional restraint. So dominant was this documentary-realist discourse that it became the accepted orthodoxy for a whole generation of writers. Its long term significance was to establish a critical pantheon of classic wartime films which has only recently started to be challenged.[566]

The influence of the documentary on maritime subjects in film had already been established. The opening sequence of *In Which We Serve*, for example, showing the building of the ship was filmed in the tradition of socialist realism and had already become a clichéd way to portray industrial workers. What was different now was that this style was incorporated into mainstream films with wide distribution.

The films of the 1930s have often been characterised as concentrating on the upper classes with lower class representations only providing comic relief.[567] Although this trend had already started to shift, especially in documentary style films, *In Which We Serve* was the first services film to give equal emphasis to higher and lower ranking personnel.[568] This aspect was of course noted by viewers and critics of the film at the time and has come to dominate any discussion of *In Which We Serve.*

Most contemporary historians[569] concur with the analysis of Aldgate and Richards; that the film presents a conservative view advocating the status quo. They note that Noël Coward was not looking to change social hierarchies but simply to encourage a

[565] Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 184.
[566] Ibid., p. 6.
[567] See Shafer, *British Popular Films 1929-1939*, pp. 16-20.
[568] Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 184.
[569] See Rayner, *The Naval War Film*, pp. 40-41, McKibbin, *Culture and Classes*, p. 444, and Rattigan, *This is England*, pp.76-93. Rattigan's views are more critical of the conservatism in the film than the others.

better understanding between classes.[570] Each class type is seen as happy with their lot, as well as knowing their place. It is significant for example that the crew of the *Torrin* appear to be regulars[571] (certainly the main characters), rather than hostilities only servicemen (with the possible exception of the Young Stoker who has only been in the navy for six months). This is in marked contrast to the post-war *The Cruel Sea* (1953), in which none of the main characters are regulars. The regulars are a symbol of the continuity of the traditions of the navy. This is underlined in the postscript voiceover at the end of the film particularly in the statement of 'peace and war';

> Here ends the story of a ship, but there will always be other ships; we are an island race, through all our centuries the sea has ruled our destiny. There will always be other ships and men to sail in them. It is these men, in peace and war to whom we owe so much. Above all victories, beyond all loss, in spite of changing values and a changing world they give to us their countrymen, eternal and indomitable pride.

This was the same message that had been promoted in naval film before the war, but *In Which We Serve* used it in a more complex way employing it to discuss social issues separate from naval operations across broad class distinctions. While class had been a theme of previous naval films this was often in the context of the individual: for example the relationship between Summerville and Bentley in *Forever England.* The fact that it is set within the navy is an important one. The longevity of British naval power, and public affection for the navy and in particular the perception that all ranks of the navy worked together made it the ideal metaphor above what might have been achieved had the focus of the film been the Army or RAF. The perceived effectiveness of the navy, which worked in a clear hierarchy, can be seen as Coward's model for how society should ideally operate. Here the navy is represented as a fixed locus of ideal values and tradition, that do not change while the world changes around it: unlike the similar speech at the end of *The Shipbuilders* which advocates ships as an agency of change in building a new commonwealth.

The conservative approach to class in *In Which We Serve* was similarly echoed in the film's configuration of an idealised British society centred on the family. Zoe Anderson suggests that the 'the metaphor of the family, denoted as a nuclear

[570] Aldgate and Richards, *Britain Can Take It,* 2007, p. 192.
[571] Also noted by Rayner, *The Naval War Film,* p. 40.

heterosexual unit, is a traditional way in which nations are perceived.'[572] Berlant and Warner have similarly identified the notion of 'national heterosexuality' which they define as 'the mechanism by which a core culture can be imagined as a sanitised space of sentimental feeling and immaculate behaviour, a space of pure citizenship.' They further contend that this 'familial model of society displaces recognition of structural racism and other systemic inequalities.'[573]This notion is doubly underlined in *In Which We Serve* in its depiction of both actual family the life and the notion of the navy as a pseudo-family with the paternal captain at its head. In spite of the crucial contribution of the female workforce during the Second World War in the armed and voluntary services and munitions, in *In Which We Serve* their patriotism is defined only by their domesticity as supportive to their men in the services. Yvonne Tasker has also noted that the idea of the woman's place as only a support to men also extended to women employed within the services: essentially the idea that by joining the services a woman could free a man for a combative role. These roles were emphasised in newsreel, film, documentaries and recruitment materials.[574] In naval films military women were almost totally absent until after the Second World War.[575] Zoe Anderson, looking at the portrayal of women in the tabloid press during the Falklands War draws the conclusion that: 'The place of the white English heterosexual woman...is in *becoming the nation*, smiling or weeping, but utterly at the service of her man.'[576] In common with the majority of naval films examined in this study the 'sanitised' space is dominated by heterosexuality and largely ignores difference in terms of both race and gender. This concurs with Lucy Noakes' findings on the popular memory of World War Two and its impact on national identity; essentially that British men and women occupied different spaces. Despite the idea that the war unified the country and a perception that everyone took part in the war effort 'popular memory...maintains a privileged place for the figure of the male soldier...although women are recognised as having played an important part...their

[572] Zoe Anderson, 'Empire's Fetish: Sexualised nationalism and gendering of the Falklands War', *National Identities*, 13/2 (2011), p. 194. Also see analysis of family as a national construction in McClintock, *Imperial Leather*, pp. 44-45, and Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity* (London: Pluto Press, 1999).
[573] Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, 'Sex in Public', in Michael Warner, *Public and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), p. 189.
[574] Yvonne Tasker, *Soldiers' Stories: Military Women in Cinema and Television since World War II* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 23.
[575] See Chapter 6.
[576] Anderson, 'Empires Fetish', p. 203.

role remains a subsidiary one when compared to that of the male involved in combat.'[577]

The 'democracy' of the film was in fact a very limited one extending only to a normative representational view of the strata of societal status quo. British cinema during the Second World War , Hurd has suggested was 'a site of negotiation and transaction: between on the one hand official needs and on the other hand the aspirations of all those groups and classes whose support for the war effort had to be won.[578] This balance in *In Which We Serve* was to place equal emphasis upon characters from different social classes but at the same time to confine them to that hierarchy.

7.5 The Release of *In Which We Serve*

The concentration on discussion of the class aspects of *In Which We Serve* has tended to obscure other elements that made the film resonate with audiences at the time of release. The focus on the genesis of the film has meant that what occurred immediately after its release has been largely neglected. The MoI famously had reservations about *In Which We Serve*, specifically that HMS *Torrin* was sunk in action and that this would have a negative impact on morale.[579] Film historians have tended to see this as part of the story of opposition towards Noël Coward, as the Ministry also questioned whether he should play the lead.[580] But on the face of it who could blame the Ministry? Here was a scenario that presented only loss of men and arms. There are a relatively high number of on screen deaths even if they are fleeting. Soldiers transported from Dunkirk are seen with severe injuries and suffering from exhaustion. The film also recalled Crete, May 1941 which was the worst month of losses for the navy and saw the sinking of the 'mighty' *Hood*.[581] When the surviving crew of the *Torrin* disbands Kinross reminds them that they will be sent to other ships

[577] Noakes, *War and the British*, p. 164.
[578] Geoffrey Hurd, 'Notes on Hegemony, the War and Cinema', in Geoffrey Hurd (ed.), *National Fictions: World War Two in British Films and Television* (London: BFI, 1984), p. 18.
[579] See Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda*, p. 184.
[580] Aldgate and Richards, *Britain Can Take It*, p. 196.
[581] For a cultural analysis of the significance of *Hood* see Ralph Harrington, 'The Mighty Hood: Navy, Empire, War at Sea and the British National Imagination, 1920-1960', *Journal of Contemporary History*, 38/2 (2003), pp. 171-185.

to take the place of other *dead* men. The film showed the 'blood, toil, tears and sweat' (in fact the film was renamed *Blood, Sweat and Tears* for distribution in Spain) and displayed the ideal British reactions to it. The navy of course did this slightly better than everyone else, as demonstrated at the moment when Kinross, to the delight of his army opposite number, makes rations more bearable: 'just ordinary Bovril rather heavily laced with sherry'.

Eleanor Roosevelt, on her visit to London in 1942, thought highly of the film but wondered how it was possible for a British audience to watch it:

> For a people whose life is so tied up with the Navy, it must have exceptional poignancy and seen here, surrounded by people who are so conscious of the truth of every detail and must be so responsive to the suffering. It was an extraordinary experience. I wondered how some of those present could bear to sit through it.[582]

The timing of the release was an important factor in its success. When the film was completed at the end of 1942, and on wide release it was being 'seen by audiences who now knew that the war had swung irreversibly in their favour'.[583]Both the Blitz and Dunkirk were already acquiring a mythic status.[584] The fact that both are used in the film is significant and deliberate. This is particularly the case in terms of the *Torrin* taking part in the Dunkirk evacuation. All other naval operations in the film are based on those of the *Kelly*, but the ship was not at Dunkirk and was in fact out of action at the time. Including the evacuation as an event served as a reminder of what Britain had come through; the film itself was an embodiment of the Dunkirk spirit. As a key element of Britain's self-perception in wartime the fully fledged mythology of Dunkirk could only occur at point at which overall victory looked likely. It is possible that had *In Which We Serve* not come out just at this moment it would not have been so effective. Had it been released just after the loss of *Repulse* and *Prince of Wales* at the end of 1941, for example, it could have been seen as seen as depressing or even unpatriotic.

[582] Eleanor Roosevelt, 'My Day', *Daily Express,* 26 October 1942.
[583] Coultass, *Images for Battle*, p.104.
[584] Ibid., p. 104.

Some respondents to a Mass Observation survey suggested that they perceived the film as documenting something that was 'true' about Britain at that time:

> We are living in most stirring times and it is good to see them being recorded.[585]

> I liked it most because everything was right. The spirit of the Navy was captured excellently and there were so many deft touches in the action and the dialogue which revealed how completely and intimately Coward knows the Englishman at war. It was obviously a film of things as they are, and not just a string of hashed up ideas from the back-room boys of the film world with false heroics and sentiment.[586]

From the moment of its release, then, the film started to be seen as emblematic of the character of Britain at war. There are other indications that the film took on symbolic significance immediately. For example in Kingston in January 1943 the council refused permission for a cadet parade to a local cinema showing *In Which We Serve.* 1,500 young people defied the ban and marched to see the film.[587] A model of the destroyer used in *In Which We Serve* was used in a panoramic display in Trafalgar Square entitled 'London Goes to Sea' in June 1943.[588] It was part of a drive to collect salvage for shipbuilding. The *only* detail of the panorama that was given in the *Times* article is that of the *Torrin* model, which was presented as the highlight of what was in fact quite a large event: Flanagan and Allen, amongst others, were entertaining the crowd from a specially built tanker and both fountains were transformed; one into an iceberg with a Russian convoy and the other with the *Torrin* in front of a Mediterranean rock.[589] Publicity and events that tied-in with films were not unfamiliar. For example in the case of *San Demetrio London* the Ministry of Fuel issued a poster with a still from the film as the main illustration and an insert for newspapers, and the Merchant Navy Comfort Service similarly launched a poster appeal on the back of the film.[590] But it was perhaps surprising that at this time a fictional ship should have been used in the promotion of the needs of the navy. There were several high profile vessels of which the public would not only have been aware but that would also have elicited an emotional response. Examples include HMS

[585] Ibid., p. 260.
[586] Ibid., p. 261.
[587] 'Parade of 1,500 breaks film ban', *Daily Express,* 11 January 1943.
[588] 'Another Salvage Drive: Trafalgar Square Display', *Times,* 2 June 1943.
[589] 'Stars Give a Victory Books Show', *Daily Express,* 8 June 1943.
[590] Ealing Distributors, Supplementary Campaign Sheet, San Demetrio London, c1944.

Hood, *Ark Royal*, and indeed the *Kelly* herself. The actual vessels, however, also represented a failure of arms, and while the *Torrin* ends up at the bottom of the sea, the public would have been most likely to associate it with the sentiment of the film, rather than defeat. It was clearly expected that the *Torrin* would be not only recognised but also seen as a positive symbol of the navy.[591]

Despite the qualms of the MoI, *In Which We Serve* was in fact a perfect reflection of their aims for cinematic propaganda set out at the beginning of the war: to show 'what Britain is fighting for', 'how Britain fights,' and 'the need for sacrifice if the war was to be won'.[592] It touched on the key events that had helped to shape sentiment on the Home Front; the Blitz and Dunkirk. It emphasised the ideal, de-politicised 'People's War' with its emphasis on characters from different classes, and the contribution and sacrifice of those at home, all drawn together by their loyalty to the ship (which can be read as a metaphor for Britain itself).

7.6 After *In Which We Serve*

The influence of the film on subsequent naval dramas was not profound in the sense that films, particularly post-war, were just as likely to focus on the officer classes as they had done at the start of the Second World War. Traces of the film are, nevertheless, clearly seen in *We Dive at Dawn*, described in the *Times* as a 'companion piece' to *In Which We Serve* dealing with a submarine rather than a destroyer.[593] *We Dive at Dawn* has a more 'democratic' captain, relaxed in both accent and behaviour, a similar cross section of characters from different classes, but a more prominent regional diversity.

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[591] The film also seemed to take on special significance abroad- in the US *The March of Time* radio programme which largely relied on reports from *Time* correspondents around the world, at the end of 1942 instead of broadcasting the annual round-up of news gave a dramatised version of *In Which We Serve* across Latin America with versions in both Spanish and Portuguese. (*Times*, 31 December 1942.). In 1944 it became the only British war film shown in Spain since the outbreak of hostilities, (*Times*, 23 September 1944.), resulting in three pro-German terrorist attacks including the throwing of incendiary grenades into the projection box in Barcelona. (*Times*, 6 October 1944).

[592] Also see Reeves, *The Power of Film Propaganda*, p. 185.

[593] 'We Dive at Dawn: The Story of a Submarine', *Times*, 20 May 1943.

While seen as a defining moment of wartime cinema it was not representative of films shown during the Second World War, as there were only a handful of films that were comparable. In addition British films only accounted for around 25% of those screened. Nevertheless it struck a chord with audiences at the time and continues to represent particular myths of the Second World War. It was the most successful of the documentary influenced naval films in terms of both the box office and critical acclaim. The social realism had been widely praised by critics although this was generally considered surpassed by the more sober *San Demetrio London.* Lejeune found it the best sea-film since Coward's *In Which We Serve* but one of the best sea yarns since Stevenson wrote *Treasure Island*.'[594] Whitebait in the *New Statesman* had never overly rated *In Which We Serve,* objecting to its theatrical roots but found *San Demetrio London* more successful seeing it as a product:

> of the documentary method, that method of looking for drama in the facts and not outside them which has so greatly increased its scope since the war. It is no longer content to make a study, but tells a story; it confronts the feature film on its own ground.[595]

Unsurprisingly the *Daily Worker* saw it as surpassing:

> any feature film about the war from Britain and America and that includes *In Which We Serve...In Which We Serve* had that implacable condescension completely lacking here and the false heroics and sentimental over-colouring accompanying every American sea film have been ruthlessly avoided.[596]

Like *In Which We Serve, San Demetrio London* was based on fact. It recounted the incident of the *San Demetrio* tanker, which had in 1940 been disabled on convoy by the German raider *von Scheer*, abandoned, but then re-boarded by a section of her crew who had been drifting for days in a lifeboat. Despite the damage to the ship the survivors brought her back safely to the Clyde. The story was well-known during the war and was the subject of an official pamphlet published in 1942.[597]

San Demetrio London concerned the Merchant Navy which had featured very little on film before 1939 but the key role it played in the nation's survival during the war brought the Merchant Navy to greater prominence. Although still under-represented during wartime it featured heavily in MoI propaganda with a number of shorts,

[594] C. A. Lejeune, 'The Films', *Observer* 9 January, 1944.
[595] William Whitebait, 'The Movies', *New Statesman* 15 January, 1944.
[596] 'Films: *San Demetrio London*', *Daily Worker* 8 January, 1944.
[597] F. Tennyson Jesse, *The Saga of San Demetrio* (London: HMSO, 1942).

pamphlets and campaigns centred on shipping. Unusually they took the step of commissioning a full length feature on the Merchant Navy, *Western Approaches*, also opting to use colour film: a scarce commodity during the war. The Merchant Navy, however, had also been of crucial importance during the First World War and this had not led to major feature films. The bias towards portrayal of the Royal Navy on film endured from the beginning of the century. It is tempting to explain this through the lower social status of the Merchant Navy; the ugly portrayal of merchant seamen in *The Three Passions* for example was unimaginable for the Royal Navy, even when showing ratings.[598] Other factors, however, need to be taken in to account. The Victorian configuration of history had a part to play in eclipsing the Merchant Navy in the national story: even where it had been prominent especially in the Elizabethan period. The Merchant Navy's peacetime existence was of course central to trade. It was not a homogenous organisation but one made up of many companies with a commercial imperative; not a national institution that existed for the sole protection of British interests. A merchant ship did not signify 'Britain' on screen in the way that a Royal Navy ship did: its allegiance and purpose had to be explained. Even during the Second World War MoI saw a need to explain the role of the Merchant Navy, as seen in the opening paragraphs to their pamphlet on the *San Demetrio* it entreated readers:

> Were [the Battle of the Atlantic] to be lost by us....not only would Britain starve but she would no longer be able to make munitions to send to Russia and to those countries in the Near East and the Orient which we are bound to help. Never sit at your table and eat the food the merchantmen have brought you...without remembering this; never see a vessel, dingy and shabby, coming safely into port without thanking her. The life and liberty of mankind depends not only on the Navy, but also on the Mercantile Marine.[599]

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[598] Penny Summerfield has argued that there is a wide gap between the portrayal of Merchant seamen and Royal Naval seamen on screen on the basis of class perceptions. She disagrees with Rayner's analysis that there was little difference between portrayals and draws on the example of Eckersley, the comic merchant captain in *Convoy*. Other than this isolated example her analysis shows that the difference is one of omission rather than active negative portrayals and does not consider *For Freedom*. She concludes that the 'suppressed story of the Merchant Navy gestures towards the insecurities of the naval hero's class position' although this is not entirely borne out by either *San Demetrio London* or *Western Approaches* (which is footnoted but not analysed). It might be suggested that there is enough evidence to support both Summerfield and Rayner's view the especially if non-war films are taken in to account. As discussed in Chapter 6 in *A Night to Remember* the merchant seamen are made almost indistinguishable from naval officers and conversely the merchant story *Passage Home* gives perhaps the most negative representation of any seamen in a British film. See Penny Summerfield, 'Divisions at Sea: Class, Gender, Race, and Nation in Maritime Films of the Second World War, 1939-60, *Twentieth Century British History*, 22/3 (2011), pp. 330-353.

[599] Jesse, *The Saga of San Demetrio*, p. 5.

The portrayal of the merchant seaman in *San Demetrio London* was largely comparable with those of Royal Navy with an emphasis on skill, navigation and stoicism. The officers were clearly portrayed as being of a lower class than their Royal Navy counterparts, largely through accents and in being less formal, but between ratings there was almost no difference. Imbued with the same characteristics as their naval counterparts the film shows British character as inherent rather than reliant on class. It is only the outsider, Yank, that needs to learn the ways of selflessness. There are hints at a sense of democracy, for example when the crew take a vote on their destination having re-boarded the burning vessel. Also Chief Engineer Pollard steps aside for Second Officer Hawkins to take the lead despite his seniority: although this is down to the fact that Hawkins is more experienced on deck. This is not necessarily an example of social democracy: one of the key ideas about the navy was that it was meritocratic at least in respect of skill. Hawkins is the better placed man for the job and therefore it goes to him and a traditional hierarchy is re-established amongst the survivors.[600] Despite a focus on working class characters the film remains essentially conservative and as Spicer notes 'for all its social-democratic impulses' the 'crew are stoics rather than idealists'.[601] For all the rhetoric and the heroism attributed to the Merchant Navy in *San Demetrio London* and *Western Approaches* it was never given the same parity in films that focussed on the Royal Navy on convoy duties where glimpses of the merchantmen were either absent or fleeting.

A documentary style was applied to both *San Demetrio London* and *Western Approaches*, just had been the case for films dealing with the commercial maritime sector before the war. Also in common with the films of fishing and shipbuilding, the rhetoric within the films tended to be similar to that of the Royal Navy. While critically successful *San Demetrio London* was a relative box office failure. Film historians have suggested that this was largely due to the production being shown late in the war by which time audiences were fatigued with by war subjects.[602] Tacitly this suggests that the earlier release of *In Which We Serve* was an important factor in its success. There were other factors too which may have affected the appeal of the film.

[600] Also see Rayner, *The Naval War Film*, p.48.
[601] Spicer, *Typical Men*, p. 14.
[602] See MacKenzie, *British War Films*, p.88 and Chapman, *The British at War*, p.189.

Unlike *In Which We Serve* there were no major stars in the film. In addition it was an all male cast without the domesticity and wider inclusivity of *In Which We Serve* which may have attracted a broader audience. There was a highly successful balance in *In Which We Serve* between documentary observation and more traditional theatrical storytelling and this combination seemed to be the most satisfactory to the wartime audience.

8. Conclusions

The case studies make a critical point that, with regards to reception, it is necessary to pay greater attention to contemporary climates in the reading of film. Due to a lack of critical success *For Freedom* has been constantly underestimated in its treatment of the navy on film. The short films on Dunkirk show that as the myth of the summer of 1940 became more embedded this changed the way in which it was represented on screen. The important story of the genesis of *In Which We Serve* has been oft repeated but not questioned in terms of deeper significance.

The correlation between navy and nation on film had been well established by the onset of the Second World War. Therefore the navy was a natural subject of propaganda film. The case studies in this chapter demonstrate that the use of the navy on film went beyond expressions of defence and duty. They were used to discuss more general national concerns: the veracity of the press in *For Freedom* and social structure in *In Which We Serve.*

The MoI had initially expected considerable use of the historic film, but confidence in the tradition and solidity of the navy was already widely accepted. The maritime tales that proved this were well known and it was not necessary to repeat them. This was demonstrated by the way that previous interpretations of British history enabled the assimilation of the Dunkirk evacuation into a myth of solidarity and perseverance. Representations of the navy on film made little use of historical scenarios. Instead, the maritime was used on film to discuss contemporary issues in contemporary settings. Strikingly *In Which We Serve* and *San Demetrio London* dealt with military failure: films that did not show the navy as ultimately successful in combat was a departure

from the pre-war scenarios. This was of course offset by the triumph of British character in the face of adversity which had been at the heart of all naval film. It demonstrated the strength of the navy as a symbol: that it could be seen to fail but still be shown in an unflickering positive light.

Chapter 5: A Girl in Every Port

1. Introduction

This chapter is concerned with the view of the sailor in comedy films and covers the period from 1900 to 1960. It gives an overview of the maritime comedies, by frequency and by subject before considering the figure of 'Jack Tar' in greater detail. This is followed by a series of case studies representing the period before 1939, Second World War comedy and the comedies of the 1950s. These are *Windbag the Sailor* (1936), *Sailors Three* (1940), *Bell Bottom George* (1944), and *The Baby and the Battleship* (1956).

The discussion places an emphasis on comedies featuring the Royal Navy as they accounted for nearly half of the total number of comedy productions with a maritime theme. It highlights first that maritime comedy films, particularly those made before the Second World War have been generally neglected in film analysis. It then argues that it is important to reconsider the early films as they are highly influential in both understanding and analysing the comedy that came later. Indeed, there is a remarkable level of consistency in the approach and subject of maritime comedies. In addition, the chapter emphasises that the persistence of the 'Jack Tar' figure, indicates the influence of earlier non-cinematic maritime representations after the arrival of film.

2. Historiography

British film comedy as a genre in this period has attracted less critical and academic attention than serious films, and less attention than Hollywood comedies. This is particularly the case for the first third of the century, where analysis has concentrated on silent stars such as Buster Keaton, Harold Lloyd, and Charlie Chaplin.[603] This has begun to be readdressed in works such as *Pimple, Pranks and Pitfalls: British*

[603] Bryony Dixon, 'British Silent Comedy Films at the National Film and Television Archive', in Alan Burton and Laraine Porter (eds), *Pimple, Pranks & Pratfalls: British Comedy Before 1930* (Trowbridge, UK: Flick Books, 2000), p .4.

Comedy Before 1930.[604] Richards in his survey *Films and British National Identity* also gives some consideration to the roots of regional comedy on film in music hall.[605]

Despite the wide body of literature on British films of the Second World War there has been little emphasis on the wartime comedy. There is a chapter on George Formby that takes in broader issues of comedy in Aldgate and Richards' *Britain Can Take It*,[606] and some discussion of individual comedic films in other works, but there is no extended piece where comedy is the primary focus. British war comedies of the post-war period have received more attention, in articles such as Susan Boyd-Bowman's 'War and Comedy'[607] and in John Ramsden's 'Refocusing "The People's War": British War Films of the 1950s'.[608] Notable works on the post-war Ealing comedies include an overview by Charles Barr[609] and the case studies of the maritime related films *The Maggie* (1954) and *Whisky Galore* (1949) by Colin McArthur.[610]

Where naval comedies in particular have been considered, it is mostly in the wider context of the service comedy. There are scattered references in MacKenzie's *British War Films 1939-1945.*[611] Rayner also devotes a section to naval comedies of the 1950s in his *The Naval War Film.*[612] There is no work that considers maritime comedies over a broader time period, nor one that considers pre-Second World War comedies as a group. Instead, the discussion of British humour in the second half of the twentieth century has emphasised the television sit-com. For example Krutnik and Neale's *Popular Film and Television Comedy* draws from Hollywood silent film in analysing the early part of the twentieth century and concentrates on British television comedy for the later part.[613] The post-war television sitcoms set in wartime have also been analysed in the context of nation and nostalgia in works by Connelly

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[604] Burton and Porter (eds), *Pimple, Pranks & Pratfalls*.
[605] Richards, *Films and National Identity*, especially pp. 252-282.
[606] Aldgate and Richards, *Britain Can Take It*, pp. 76-95.
[607] Susan Boyd-Bowman, 'War and Comedy', in Geoff Hurd (ed.), *National Fictions: World War Two in Films and Television* (London: BFI, 1984).
[608] Ramsden, 'Refocusing The People's War', pp. 35-63.
[609] Charles Barr, *Ealing Studios* (London: Cameron & Tayleur/ David & Charles, 1977).
[610] Colin McArthur, *Whisky Galore! And The Maggie* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002).
[611] MacKenzie, *British War Films.*
[612] Rayner, *The Naval War Film.*
[613] Frank Krutnik and Steve Neale, *Popular Film and Television Comedy* (London: Routledge, 1990)

and Richards.[614] Whilst these analyses provide a framework for discussion, it is apparent that maritime comedies before, during and after the Second World War have not thus far been subject to coherent academic analysis.

3. Comedy in the Formation of National Identity

> Cinema has been seen as a disposable product during the course of history, and Britain more than most countries has an innate snobbery about film in general and 'low' comedy in particular; the British film industry was not sufficiently financially successful to overcome highbrow critical prejudice.[615]

As noted above, writing on film humour in Britain places more emphasis on American silent comedies of the early part of the twentieth century than on British productions. Dixon has suggested that this is because British comedy had a poor reputation, and has often 'been dismissed as parochial and poorly produced'.[616] Both Dixon and Hammond argue however that early British comedy has been misinterpreted. They examine this through the example of Pimple, played by comic Fred Evans.[617] He has often been dismissed as second-rate in comparison with the American stars but it is important to note that his films enjoyed considerable popularity in Britain.[618] Dixon and Hammond argue that to understand the public's engagement with Pimple it is necessary to understand his development through the tradition of the peculiarly British pantomime clown. The importance of burlesque and music hall traditions have not been generally recognised by film historians although James notes that the popularity of film comedy amongst working-class audiences of the 1930s 'undoubtedly reflects a continuity between music-hall entertainment and the

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[614] In particular the television sitcom *Dad's Army* which is analysed by Connelly in *We Can Take It!*, pp. 78-84 and by Richards in *Films and British National Identity*, pp. 351-365.

[615] Bryony Dixon, 'British Silent Comedy Films at the National Film and Television Archive', in Burton and Porter (eds), *Pimple, Pranks and Pratfalls,* p. 5.

[616] Ibid., p. 4.

[617] With a background in music hall Brothers Fred and Joe Evans produced a number of comedy shorts from 1912 until 1918 featuring the highly successful Pimple character. The format of the films developed to consist largely of parodies of major films, plays and current events, beginning with a spoof of *The Battle of Waterloo* (1913).

[618] Michael Hammond, 'Cultivating Pimple', in Alan Burton & Laraine Porter (eds), *Pimple, Pranks & Pratfalls*, p. 67.

cinema'.[619] Both argue that a lack of recognition of the roots of the comedy in these films means that they have been misjudged in comparison with the equivalent American product. Dixon argues that this is only beginning to be readdressed 'as we understand more of the cinema's interaction with contemporary forms of entertainment such as the music hall, early fairground attractions and the legitimate theatre'.[620] The importance of recognising the memes of the comedies is one of the central arguments of this chapter, which will be explored further in the case studies.

Dixon and Hammond's observations refer to film prior to 1930, but the lack of later press reviews and a general lack of academic attention suggest that some of the attitudes towards British comedy persisted up until the 1960s. It can be argued, however, that humour was crucial in the construction and representation of national identities. This is something that appears to have been taken as granted in the study of British sit-coms in establishing links between comedy and identity, for example in the previously mentioned work on *Dad's Army* (1968-1977) by Connelly and Richards, and in Andy Medhurst's work on *The Royle Family* (1998-2000).[621]

If as Medhurst suggests in looking at specifically English humour, '...comedy plays an absolutely pivotal role in the construction of cultural identity',[622] then more comprehensive analysis is vital in gaining a more complete picture of British humour and its relation to the nation's self-perception. Attention therefore needs to be paid to the earlier comedy films. As Medhurst points out:

> Comedy, after all, is a cultural and social practice that is both shaped and contributes to historical conjunctures; and pivots on contested and ambivalent relationships of power; it constitutes a repository of symbols that can be drawn on to indicate how, where and why people place themselves; it is a prime testing ground for ideas about belonging and exclusion.[623]

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[619] James, *Popular Culture and Working-Class Taste in Britain*, p. 205, and Bryony Dixon, 'The Pimple Films', BFI Screenonline www.sreenonline.org.uk/film/id11514 [accessed 20 October 2010] and Hammond, 'Cultivating Pimple', p. 67.
[620] Ibid. [accessed 20 October 2010]
[621] Medhurst, *A National Joke*, pp. 144-158.
[622] Ibid., p. 1.
[623] Ibid., p. 37.

As Horton has suggested comedy creates a 'liminal' space and within this it is possible to temporarily subvert social norms and convention.[624] If comedy is also a testing ground then this helps to explain why it could encompass a wider range of characters that were generally excluded from the serious maritime films. These included those who existed outside, but still defined recognised national characteristics or values, as well as those who embodied these characteristics in less than heroic ways.

It might be argued that comedy utilises the disjunct between ideal characteristics such as those identified by Richards (outlined in the introduction to the thesis) and mundane experience which subverts those ideals. This is implied in Kift's analysis of English music hall, and in Boyd-Bowman's theory of how comedy functions in British war comedies. Kift suggests that the values propagated in music hall included 'hedonism, ribaldry, the enjoyment of alcohol, and the portrayal of marriage as a tragic-comic disaster' which directly contrasted with middle class ideas of 'refinement, abstinence, a puritanical work ethic, marriage and the family as the bedrock of social order...'[625] Boyd-Bowman argues that,

> ...in wartime *ideal* behaviour can be characterised as courage and heroism, sacrifice of self for one's comrades, brilliant strategic planning and so forth, and these are the dominant representations in serious war films. Comedies, on the other hand, draws on typifications somewhat closer to mass popular experience of war time: the mingling of the classes in military service, the unfamiliar disciplines of war work, the shared privations of the Home Front.[626]

Both analyses suggest that the morality being subverted in these comedies included expectations around class.[627] Issues of class were certainly at the base of the majority of the maritime comedies, and this subject matter might be taken as a specifically British feature of these productions. Unlike the majority of the maritime films examined elsewhere in this thesis, virtually all the comedies are told from the point of

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[624] Andrew S. Horton (ed.), *Comedy/ Cinema/ Theory* (Berkeley: University of California Press), p. 5.
[625] Dagmar Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 176.
[626] Susan Boyd-Bowman, 'War and Comedy', in Geoff Hurd (ed.) *National Fictions: World War Two in British Films and Television* (London: BFI, 1984), p .39.
[627] Boyd-Bowman, 'War and Comedy', p. 39.

view of the lower deck. They deliberately embrace the tension between the officer class and the able seamen and question the nature of authority and its relationship to the 'Jack Tar' figure in all his incarnations. 'Jack Tar', as a generic name for an ordinary seaman, as will be seen, was used to embody various stereotyped characteristics of the seaman.

4. Overview of Maritime Comedies

4.1 Frequencies

The table opposite shows the number of British maritime related comedies made between 1895 and 1992. It is drawn from the data compiled in Appendix 1. It demonstrates that maritime comedy existed as a genre from the inception of the film industry and went alongside the early proliferation of naval and merchant fiction and non-fiction film. The documentation on many of the films of the early years is often less detailed than for later periods.[628] It has not been possible, for example, to establish how the films divide between naval and merchant subjects between 1895 and 1920. This is because often the descriptions of the films in the catalogues used do not specify between naval and merchant seamen, and this is occasionally the case for later periods. In addition many of these films no longer exist and so it not possible to check the subject, although it has in some cases been established by cast lists. Bearing in mind the profile of the navy in the period 1895-1910 in particular, it is probable that more naval films were made than it has been possible to identify. It should be assumed, therefore that actual figures, in particular for the period between 1895 and 1920, were in reality higher than this table suggests.

Of the maritime films identified as part of this study comedies account for approximately 15% of the total. The table also clearly shows a pattern following both world wars. In the first ten years after both wars there were relatively few comedies, but the subsequent decade showed a substantial increase. In part this reflects a more general trend in maritime films, especially with those concerning the Royal Navy. There were practical reasons for this. As previously discussed the British film industry suffered a down turn in the period after the First World War. It is possible

[628] The comedy table includes only films that are described as comedies in the sources used for the Appendix 1, and does not include films where the title indicates that it is likely to be a comedy.

that the high figures between 1930 and 1939 were influenced by the prospect of war at the latter end of the decade. There does, however, seem to have been a cultural pause, perhaps indicating that a 'cooling off' period was necessary before it was possible to depict the events of war or the military in general, in comedic terms on screen. This does not seem to have been the result of particular sensitivities: during the Second World War the navy was certainly an acceptable target for comedy. It is more likely that the public was simply tired of war as a subject.[629]

[629] The belief that there was a gap between the war and the publication of canonical volumes as part of the 'war books boom' of the late 1920s has encouraged the idea of a period of latency between the conclusion of the conflict and its representation in popular culture. But as Dan Todman, drawing substantially on the work of Rosa Maria Bracco (*Merchants of Hope: British Middlebrow Writers and the First World War, 1919-1939* (Oxford: Berg, 1993).) has pointed out, a substantial quantity of texts on the war in a variety of formats were available to audiences from the start of the 1920s (Todman, *Myth and Memory*, p.155). Within the space of this thesis it is not possible to discuss the much wider topic of humour and the Great War, but this study would emphasise that issues of commerce were as important as those of taste in determining the changing number of films.

Table 1: Frequency of Maritime Comedies

Year	Total Maritime Comedies	Of which RN Comedies
1895-1909	11	1
1910-1919	15	6
1920-1929	2	0
1930-1939	24	11
1940-1949	10	8
1950-1959	19	10
1960-1969	9	6
1970-1992	4	0
Decades around wars	**Total Maritime Comedies**	**Of which RN Comedies**
1914-1918	9	5
1919-1929	2	0
1930-1939	24	11
1939-1945	13	8
1946-1955	4	2
1955-1965	24	15

Source: Data compiled from Appendix 1.

4.2 Subjects and Characters of Maritime Comedy

This section sets out the major themes and characters of the maritime comedies. It also outlines some of the common features of the comedies that are looked at in further detail in the case studies. Examples of most maritime activity could be found amongst the topics of the comedy films, including cruise liners,[630] shipbuilding,[631] fishing,[632] and cargo vessels[633] although, with the exception of cruising they are isolated cases. Others included sea romances, adventures (such as exploration or shipwreck) and crime (such as smuggling and espionage). The table demonstrates, however, that just under half of the comedies made in this period dealt with the Royal Navy and formed by the far the single largest group. The relative frequencies of topics parallel those of the serious maritime films. Strikingly, nearly all the identified comedy films either had a contemporary setting, or were set in the very recent past. This observation holds largely true for the entire period up until 1960. The very few comedies with a historical setting mostly fall out of the central time period of this thesis.[634]

As mentioned above, maritime comedies encompassed a wider range of characters than serious maritime films. Most of the films take the perspective of the lower deck, and so almost all are 'bottom-up', in contrast to the prevailing trend of naval dramas.[635] Three other features distinguished the characters in comedies from other serious maritime films. First, there was often greater regional diversity and more use of regional accents. This was in part because the comedies tended to place a greater emphasis on working class characters and their communities. In addition the

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[630] For example, *Seeing is Believing* (1934); *All at Sea* (1935); *Hey! Hey! USA* (1938), *Doctor at Sea* (1955); *Next to No Time* (1958).
[631] For example: *Shipyard Sally*, (1939), *The Demi-Paradise* (1943)
[632] For example: *The Lost Ring* (1911, 465ft); *Yellow Sands* (1938); *Wonderful Things* (1957).
[633] For example: *The Maggie* (1954).
[634] *Carry On Jack* (1964) set in 1805; *Lock Up Your Daughters* (1969) Eighteenth century; *Carry on Columbus*, (1992), Fifteenth Century.
[635] The exception to this is some of the cruise ship comedies that often centred on passengers rather than the sailors. Many of these, such as *All at Sea* (1935), about a man posing as a famous novelist to win the affections of a girl on the ship, were based on West End plays. As such they owed much to the farces centred on the middle and upper classes, with the cruise ship standing in for the country house location.

comedies were often vehicles for stage comedians who had started in the music halls, drawn from all over the country and represented differences in regional humour. Second, the comedy device allowed characters usually not on board ship, including women and children, to play major roles. Wrens, for example, were depicted in greater numbers and more often than in the dramas although, like other women in the comedies, not necessarily in a positive or progressive light. Third, and perhaps most importantly, there was a much greater focus on the ordinary seaman rather than officers. The 'Jack Tar' figure, while a familiar face in providing light comedy in the naval dramas was at the centre of the comedies. The image is often more exaggerated in the comedies and owes much to previous imagery of the sailor either as a libertine or the ordinary man as hero. This needs to be looked at in greater detail to gain an understanding of the portrayals of the ordinary sailor on film.

4.3 'Jack Tar'

'Jack Tar' is a term most often applied to the ordinary sailor of either the Royal or merchant navies and this is the meaning that is taken here. The image and reality of 'Jack Tar' has been considered in a number of recent works, notably Isaac Land's *War, Nationalism and the British Sailor 1750-1850*,[636] Mary A. Conley's *From Jack Tar to Union Jack* (1870-1918),[637] Ronald Hope's *Poor Jack*[638] and Lincoln's *Representing the Royal Navy*.[639] None of these, however, venture far enough into the twentieth century to consider the lasting image of 'Jack Tar' and his manifestations on film.

The emergence of the 'Jack Tar' figure in popular imagination is, however, well documented in these texts. Land suggests that 'Jack Tar's libertinism... should not be understood as a timeless quality of the roving seafarer but as a historically specific phenomenon'.[640] As this suggests the characteristics popularly assigned to 'Jack Tar' were not static. For example, William Pitt the Younger in the 1790s made a

[636] Isaac Land, *War Nationalism and the British Sailor, 1750-1850* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).
[637] Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack.*
[638] Ronald Hope, *Poor Jack; The Perilous History of the Merchant Seaman* (London: Chatham, 2003).
[639] Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy.*.
[640] Land, *War, Nationalism and the British Sailor,* p. 45.

conscious effort to improve the image of the sailor. He commissioned popular songwriter Charles Dibdin to write songs that promoted the idea of a 'patriotic and grateful' sailor.[641] As Lincoln suggests, this helped to change the characteristics associated with 'Jack Tar', although these songs nevertheless retained a certain devil-may-care attitude:

> The popular image of the sailor which came to dominate by the end of the century was of a blunt, cheerful lad determined to enjoy the present and heedless of the future. This was the image in Dibdin's sea songs and on the stage where such songs often formed part of the entertainment.[642]

Conley details the shift of the image of the sailor in the nineteenth century as:

> ...not simply characterised by flights to excess as was typical of the eighteenth century imagery – to women, to drink or to violence – rather representations of naval manhood, both afloat and ashore, began to assert a cohesive masculinity that was endowed with self restraint, respectability and bravery.[643]

This picture of the sailor enjoyed considerable longevity: Conley's is a recognisable description of Shorty Blake in *In Which We Serve.* Despite the cultural shifts to a more heroic view of the sailor, however, earlier incarnations persisted and could co-exist with newer versions. This was particularly the case in terms of comedy, where the dubious behaviour of the ordinary sailor allowed for the interplay between him and the officers, and hence the subversive discussion of class. But there are also examples in documentary. In the 1970s, the major BBC series *Sailor,*[644] about life on board the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*, opened with the ship preparing for a five and a half month deployment to North America. While the officers were seen on board discussing operations, the ordinary sailors were filmed getting drunk on shore with the worst offenders having to be disciplined as they came back aboard.

In comedy film, 'Jack Tar' could therefore be an amorous sailor, a drunken sailor, a brawling sailor, a hero or a combination of all four. These portrayals of the sailor were evident in the earliest comic films. Examples are to be found in such titles as

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641 Ibid., p. 5.
642 Lincoln, *Representing the Royal Navy,* p. 29.
643 Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack,* p. 3.
644 *Sailors* (BBC, 1976).

The Sailor's Sweetheart (1905, 166ft), *A Naval Engagement* (1906, 450ft) about a policeman and sailor involved in a fight and the *Boatswain's Mate* (1924) about a swindler. The character persists throughout the period in representations from *Sailors Three* to *Carry on Jack* (1964).

As a separate character 'Jack Tar' has not been analysed in film studies although his persona relates to figures identified in Spicer's *Typical Men.*[645] In particular the portrayal of Tommy in *Sailor's Three* or George in *Bell-Bottom George* (which are both discussed in the case studies) can be seen to resemble his analysis of 'Fools and Rogues'. Spicer uses Enid Welsford's arguments 'that their primary function is to act as a safety valve, freeing audiences from shame about human frailties, weaknesses and failures, removing through laughter the moral burden of behaving responsibly and heroically'.[646] He adds that both

> ...Fools and Rogues occupy a liminal, licensed space on the margins of society for 'unacceptable' masculine traits, which can include deviousness and incompetence. Their ideological function varies, but they can be empowering for subordinated groups as their resourcefulness, ingenuity and resilience often expose the arbitrariness of social systems.[647]

It is apposite that the fool and the rogue should be grouped together in the consideration of naval comedies. The fool was as an aspect of 'Jack Tar'. He was often portrayed as a hero afloat and incompetent (in the sense of being parted from his money, or being unable to sustain himself in a domestic setting)[648] ashore. He was rarely a fool aboard ship. In 1940s and 1950s comedies, this became a useful device in representing the new recruit, the reluctant recruit or the National Service man.

5. Maritime Comedies Prior to 1939

It might be argued that early British comedy films did not continue to serve as long running cultural reference points in that they were rarely seen and many of them no

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[645] Andrew Spicer, *Typical Men*.
[646] Enid Welsford, *The Fool: His Social and Literary History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1935) quoted in Spicer, *Typical Men*, p. 19.
[647] Spicer, *Typical Men*, p. 19.
[648] Conley, *From Jack Tar to Union Jack*, p. 3.

longer exist. As noted above, however, an understanding of them is important in the development of British maritime comedies over the course of the twentieth century; since many of the same themes and plots recurred in later productions.

Three things become obvious in surveying the maritime comedies of the period before 1939. First, the vast majority of the performers were drawn from the stage and music hall. Second, plots centred primarily upon ordinary seamen and working class characters. Third, maritime comedies emerged simultaneously with the first serious fictional and non-fiction maritime film,[649] and their contemporary settings allowed them to respond to recently made serious fiction, non-fiction films and to wider social issues.

A great number of shorts, for example, were made of sailors undertaking drills or participating in sports,[650] and these were parodied in such films as *Burlesque Naval Gun Drill* (1903, 60ft) featuring the crew of HMS *Excellent* and a *Comic Boxing Match* (1899, 150ft) on board SS *Carisbrooke Castle*. Another common subject of the actualities was the filming of various dignitaries on board ships and this was also the subject of the comedy *Consul Crosses the Atlantic* (1909, 808ft). Herbert Ponting's *With Captain Scott RN to the South Pole* (1911, a non-fiction film) was given comedic treatment in *Lieutenant Pimple's Dash for the Pole* (1914).

Maritime films were used in the representation and recognition of current issues that were not necessarily related to the sea. For example *Two Sides to a Boat*,[651] a comedy about a suffragette hiding as she thinks a group of sailors intend to tar her, was made in 1913, the same year as the so-called 'Cat and Mouse Act'.[652] Hammond notes that suffragettes were 'a common target of abuse throughout music hall and the earliest comic films,' appearing 'as a folk devil representing the kind of social respectability

[649] The first comedy film that it has been possible to identify was *Landing at Low Tide* (1899, 75ft).
[650] See Appendix 2.
[651] *Two Sides to a Boat*, (British and Colonial Films, 1913, length unknown).
[652] The Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Ill-Health Act) 1913, passed by the Liberal government aimed at suppressing the tactic of hunger strikes by imprisoned suffragettes, as well as public outcry and sympathy for such prisoners being force fed. It meant that prisoners suffering malnutrition would be released to recover.

associated with temperance reformers'.[653] The film therefore both drew on previous comedic form and contemporary debates.

Maritime films also directly parodied recent fictional productions representing the Royal Navy. The Lieutenant Rose and Lieutenant Daring series were directly parodied in the comedy Pimple series. Their recurrent espionage plots are spoofed in *Lieutenant Pimple and the Stolen Submarine* (1914). As previously discussed, espionage plots abounded in the serious naval film when the fear of invasion and infiltration were genuine concerns amongst the public. The film was both cinematically reflexive and represented current issues.

5.1. *Windbag the Sailor* (1936)

Windbag the Sailor has been chosen to illustrate some of the common factors of the early comedies. It is typical in that it drew upon references to other films and was a vehicle for a well-known stage comedian. Much of the film draws upon historical portrayals of the Royal Navy and merchant seamen, but it is presented in a contemporary setting in the Merchant Navy.

5.1.1 Synopsis

Captain Ben Cutlet only has experience of sailing a canal barge, but in his sister's Cornwall pub he regales the customers with tall tales of his nautical adventures. He comes to the attention of Olivia Potter-Porter, the widow of a naval officer and the joint owner of a shipping company. Unaware that he is a fraud Olivia invites him to give a lecture to some Sea Scouts, where it becomes apparent to the majority of the audience that he has never been to sea. On witnessing this, Yates, Olivia's crooked shipping partner, spots an opportunity to place Cutlet in command of an unseaworthy vessel, the *Rob Roy*. Yates, in cahoots with the First Mate, Maryatt, intends that the vessel should be scuttled for the insurance money with the blame placed on Cutlet. Ignorant of this, Olivia, asks Cutlet to become Captain. He agrees but tries to arrange for fellow bar workers, old timer, Harbottle, and young lad, Albert, to rescue him with

[653] Hammond, 'Cultivating Pimple', p. 62.

a fake telegram calling him away at the last minute. They trick him and stow away on the ship, forcing Cutlet to set sail.

Once out in the Pacific, Marryat and the crew mutiny and tie up Cutlet and Harbottle as they prepare to scuttle. Albert learns of the plot and pretends to join the mutineers but frees the prisoners and they get away on a raft with a few provisions and a battery radio. As they leave Cutlet stands up to promise revenge on the crew (in a manner similar to Bligh in *Mutiny on the Bounty*) claiming the full weight of the Royal Navy behind him. They drift to a South Sea island where they are confronted by cannibals whom they placate with the radio set, which Cutlet convinces them is an oracle. They settle happily amongst the natives, enjoying the company of the women, again mirroring the exploits of the *Bounty* crew. When the mutineers arrive in a rowing boat they are taken captive.

The *Rob Roy* itself also drifts to the island, having been prevented from sinking by the ship's engineer. Cutlet takes command again with the help of Harbottle, Albert and the engineer and sets sail for England. On the way back he manages to dislodge a millionaire's yacht from a sandbank by sheer luck, but is praised for his great seamanship and comes back to a hero's welcome, somewhat marred by his sailing into the jetty, knocking the end of it into the sea.

5.1.2 Reception

The reviews were positive in the popular press and the film came second in *Kinematograph Weekly's* 'Box Office Winners' in January 1937.[654] There was particular praise for comedian Will Hay as Cutlet. The film was described as 'laced with good, hearty laughs and, for a welcome change, bright dialogue'.[655] The *Daily Mirror* commented: 'This is a really funny slapstick comedy. Will Hay is in great form and the situations are the funniest I've seen in a British film this year'.[656]Both of these reviews noted the absence of a love story: 'There's no romantic interest. But

654 'Box Office Winners', *Kinematograph Weekly*, 13 January 1938.
655 'Will Hay in Windbag the Sailor', *Daily Express*, 18 December 1936.
656 Reginald J. Whitley, 'Windbag the Sailor', *Daily Mirror*, 18 December 1936.

don't be put off by this. There is laughing enough to compensate for that'. This demonstrates the expectation of romantic involvement in a comedy film. The women in *Windbag the Sailor* are stock characters: the sexually predatory native girls, a harridan sister and an upper class do-gooder.

Typically for the period, the quality press paid little attention to the release of *Windbag the Sailor*. The *Times* gave little more than the plot although it praised Will Hay as Cutlet.[657] Similarly the *Monthly Film Bulletin* praised it as a vehicle for Hay, and for its technical qualities.[658] In contrast the popular press gave it more prominence. Both the *Daily Express* and the *Daily Mirror* published stories about the making of the film during its production period.[659]

5.1.3 Will Hay and the Music Hall

Greater coverage in the popular press could be seen as an indication that the film was expected to appeal to a working class audience. Like the vast majority of actors in comedy films of the period, Will Hay was already a well-known music hall star. Music hall had been the most popular form of entertainment during the latter part of the nineteenth century.[660] The move from pub entertainments to purpose built theatres broadened the audience from predominately working class men to include the middle classes, women and families.[661] Kift argues, however, looking at the period around 1910, that although the large West End theatres attracted a wide audience including the aristocracy, the theatres in the London suburbs and in regional towns largely drew audiences from their immediate vicinity. These were made up, she suggests, by 'small tradesmen, shopkeepers and their assistants, mechanics and labourers as well as soldiers and sailors'.[662] Artists learnt their craft in the halls, creating characters and

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[657] 'New Films in London: Three Comedies', *Times,* 21 December 1936.
[658] 'Windbag the Sailor', *Monthly Film Bulletin,* 3/6 (1936), p. 215.
[659] For example: 'Windbag the Sailor', *Daily Express,* 21August 1936, 'Fine Day Keeps Will Hay Away', *Daily Express,* 26 August 1936, 'Fat Boy Rolling to Stardom', *Daily Mirror,* 7 September 1936.
[660] Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 256.
[661] Dagmar Kift, *The Victorian Music Hall: Culture, Class and Conflict*, p. 62.
[662] Ibid., p. 62.

comedy that worked for these audiences and replicated this on screen. It would not be surprising if the comedy films appealed to a similar demographic.

Will Hay was an example of the way in which music hall stars could move into film. He was famous for creating a headmaster character on stage, which he transferred to the screen. The vestiges of this character were according to the *Daily Express* still apparent in his role in *Windbag the Sailor*: 'Will Hay proves his worth as a single-name comedian by retaining the familiar basis of his old St Michael's manner – the shabby defiance, the grandiose ignorance – and bungles his way through a series of pleasantly fantastic adventures'.[663] A similar pattern of comedians largely playing the same character in different film settings persisted until the 1960s with examples such as George Formby and Norman Wisdom.

5.1.4 Film and Literary References in *Windbag the Sailor*

Only the *Daily Express* picked up on the references in *Windbag the Sailor* to *Mutiny on the Bounty*, which had been released the year before. It called the film a 'rollicking parody of all sea sagas from *Bounty* to the *Girl Pat*'.[664] As the quote indicates the film was not a focussed parody and only *Mutiny on the Bounty* was directly spoofed. There were also parallels with *Treasure Island*,[665] which had been adapted for film four times (all American productions)[666] before the release of *Windbag the Sailor.* This was evident in the character of the young lad Albert. It was a common device in boys' literature to follow the narrative through the eyes of a midshipman or cabin boy undertaking their first voyage. For example Frederick Marryat's *Mr Midshipman Easy*, published in 1836, tells the story of midshipman rescuing women from a Spanish ship and was adapted twice for film in 1915 and 1936.[667] Albert mirrors Jim Hawkins in his background from the seafarer's pub, and of course by being involved

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663 'Will Hay in Windbag the Sailor', *Daily Express*, 18 December 1936.

664 Ibid. 'Girl Pat' was not a film but the true story of skipper George 'Dod' Orsborne, a Grimsby fisherman who in 1936 illegally took the boat, *Girl Pat*, to travel across the Atlantic, and who subsequently wrote about his adventures.

665 Robert Louis Stevenson, *Treasure Island* (London: Cassell & Co, 1883).

666 These are listed in the footnotes in the introduction.

667 Frederick Marryat, *Mr Midshipman Easy* (London: Saunders & Otley, 1836). On film: *Midshipman Easy* (1915), *Midshipman Easy* (1936).

in a mutiny. Albert, however, a rotund boy, is not the wide-eyed adventurer of the nineteenth century tales; he is self-serving and continually outwits both Harbottle and Cutlet.

Cutlet himself is not a sea captain but he is seen to inhabit the persona of the old mariner regaling an audience with tales of his adventures and longing to be at sea. The narration of the old salt is one of the oldest devices in English literature, notably going back as far as tenth century poem *The Seafarer* in the *Exeter Book*[668] and can be traced through such works as *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.[669] Cutlet parodies the character of the old mariner, exaggerating impossible tales and giving himself away by recounting details slightly differently each time. Uncle Albert in the BBC sit-com *Only Fools and Horses* (1981-2003) is a later incarnation of a very similar character who also exaggerates his experiences. Although Uncle Albert has at least served in the navy, his medals were won by serving on seven ships that were all sunk, rather than for individual acts of heroism.

It can be largely assumed that the references in *Windbag the Sailor* would be broadly understood, not necessarily as being to particular works, but also through the repetition of these characters in both writing and film. The sea dog barely needs referencing to the audience beyond the actor wearing a naval cap and sitting in a pub. Presumably the scenes from *Mutiny on the Bounty* were considered well-known enough for audiences to participate in the joke as the parodies are so direct.

The film, however, despite the South Sea Islands episode is removed from the exoticism of the nineteenth century tales and the Royal Navy and the drama is undercut by the context of a dubious, modern day merchant cargo company. This placed the characters within a more ordinary experience and community. The *Rob Roy's* crew includes a black sailor, a common occurrence in the Merchant Navy but almost never represented on film in this period.[670] Although the black natives are

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[668] 'The Seafarer' in S. A. J. Bradley (ed.), *Anglo Saxon Poetry* (London: Dent, 1995), p. 329.

[669] Samuel Coleridge Taylor, 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The poem was also adapted for film, *The Ancient Mariner* (US, 1925).

[670] The only other example found was the presence of a black sailor in the scenes in the Seaman's Mission in *The Three Passions.*

presented in clichéd terms of naivety and cannibalism, there is no attempt at deriving humour from the black crew member on the basis of race.

The Royal Navy has only a distant presence in that Olivia Potter-Porter's grandfather was an admiral, through which she believes that she has 'the sea in her blood'. His portrait and his sea chest containing all his navigation equipment are the only hint at efficient and appropriate seafaring in the film. Coupled with the fact that Olivia is the only benign (if naive) character in the film who does not act purely out of self interest, there is a sense that the social order of ruling class is appropriate and should be maintained.

To conclude, therefore, *Windbag the Sailor* demonstrated the persistence and consistency of particular seafaring characters in British narrative tradition and reinforced the status quo. In this, it was typical of many early comedies.

6. Comedy in the Second World War

The navy featured significantly in wartime comedies with a bias towards the Royal Navy. In general, comedies and popular melodramas outnumbered propaganda films.[671] Although the comedies could be effective for the purpose of morale they were not a priority for the navy. Unlike most of the naval films they did not therefore have Admiralty co-operation. Similarly, comedies were not an initial priority for the MoI and Mass Observation surveys noted a lack of the use of humour in official film.[672] As Aldgate and Richards recount, however, the Mass Observation surveys also indicated that humour was an essential part in maintaining public spirits and, although the MoI did belatedly realise this, this need was largely filled by the commercial cinema.[673] The comedy genre was already well served by the commercial sector and when the war began the top box office stars were Gracie Fields and George Formby.[674]

[671] Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 253.
[672] M-O FR 458, 'MoI Shorts', 25 October 1940.
[673] Aldgate and Richards, *Britain Can Take It*, p. 77.
[674] Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 257.

In terms of propaganda, the message of wartime comedies may have been lighter than the dramas but they still gave a view of the navy and of British character. When *Let George do It* was released a Mass Observation survey revealed that 80% of those interviewed did not perceive the film to be propaganda, despite the fact that George saved merchant ships, foiled a sabotage plot and in a fantasy sequence knocked out Hitler.[675] This may have been because the film did not resemble any of the more serious and documentary style films associated with the MoI, or because the kind of plot was already familiar and naval stories were already ubiquitous.

The prominent comedians of the period were, as they had been before the war, drawn from the music hall. Many starred in comedy morale boosters, and most had at least one naval vehicle. These included George Formby and Gracie Fields as well as Will Fyffe, The Crazy Gang, Tommy Trinder, Sandy Powell and Jack Buchanan.[676] Many of these films were musicals and drew upon its tradition of saucy innuendo. This is borne out in the case of both George Formby and Tommy Trinder in the following case studies.

6.1 *Sailors Three* (1940)

6.1.1 Synopsis

HMS *Ferocious* leaves Portsmouth in pursuit of the *Ludendorf*,[677] a German pocket battleship, at sea in the South Atlantic. The ship refuels in Brazil and shore leave is granted and three sailors, Tommy Taylor, Johnny Meadows and Llewellyn Davis, known as 'The Admiral' set off together. Tommy and Johnny set off for the Eldorado nightclub in search of girls. Meanwhile Llewellyn goes to meet his sister Jane who is working as a governess but due to sail for England that evening on the *Savannah* with the Pilkington family. She goes with him to meet his friends at the club.

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[675] 'Let George Do It, 1940', Richards and Sheridan (eds), *Mass Observation at the Movies*, p. 340.

[676] For example George Formby: *Let George Do It* (1940); *Bell Bottomed George* (1944). Will Fyffe: *Neutral Port* (1940); *For Freedom* (1940). The Crazy Gang: *Alf's Button Afloat* (1938). Tommy Trinder: *Sailors Three* (1940). Sandy Powell: *All at Sea* (1940). Jack Buchanan: *The Middle Watch* (1940).

[677] Although named for General Eric Ludendorff the ship's name is spelt with one f in the film.

Tommy and Johnny are busy attempting to woo the same girl. When Llewellyn arrives they are reluctant to go over to his table to meet his sister, having seen an old unflattering photograph of her. Jane, now older and very attractive, overhears their disparaging remarks and when they both dance with her she does not let on that she is Llewellyn's sister. She agrees to meet both outside and tricks them, driving off with her brother. Eager to apologise and flirt with her the two sailors follow her to the *Savannah*. While they both compete for her attention Llewellyn goes to the bar to get some milk for Jane's troublesome charge, Digby Pilkington. Llewellyn gets caught up in a jolly wedding party and they refuse to let him order milk and ply him with champagne. When Tommy and Johnny come looking for him he is totally drunk and unable to move and the liner sets sail with all three still onboard.

The ship's drunken pilot insists they all drink with him before he will take them out in the tender to the *Ferocious.* Drunk, they are mistakenly set aboard the *Ludendorf* instead, and the Captain locks them in a cabin below decks. When the majority of the German sailors leave the ship to collect food supplies, they take control of the ship with the help of an Austrian sailor, Hans, a reluctant recruit to the German navy. They set course for England and on the way are stopped by another German ship and take on board survivors from the *Savannah* which had been sunk. The group includes Jane and the Pilkingtons. They are forced to stop again with an oil leak and the ship is retaken by the original crew. The *Ferocious* enters into the fray, and, confused by a Swastika that was modified into a Union Jack by the British sailors, does not realise that the *Ludendorf* is about to open fire.

Tommy and the others make various attempts to foil the German sailors and disable fire, but after Digby sets off one of the guns the *Ferocious* returns fire. Tommy borrows Jane's make-up mirror to signal the British ship, which then captures the German vessel. They return home to a hero's welcome and are filmed for a newsreel. Hans is made a British citizen and Jane and Tommy get married.

6.1.2 Reception

Sailors Three was part of a wave of service comedies made at the beginning of the war. Tommy Trinder, the star of the film, had already made *Laugh it Off* (1940) which saw him as a new recruit in the Army. As Aldgate and Richards note, 'Joining up films were almost obligatory for comedians and the trend lasted well into 1941,' and they comment that the topicality of these films contributed to their success.[678] The plot of *Sailors Three* loosely alluded to the Battle of the River Plate and also referenced recruitment. As well as continuing the topicality that had been a feature of earlier films, in wartime, this ability to respond to current events contributed to films' capacity to increase morale, providing they matched the prevailing mood or experience of the country. This may help to explain why no historical naval comedies were made during the war.

Just as with previous comedies *Sailors Three* was less widely reviewed than other, more serious, films. It did, however, receive universally good reviews in the quality and popular press, with recognition that light relief was welcome at the end of 1940. *The Times* declared that 'There is a good deal of fun in this frolic of three drunken sailors...'[679] and *Monthly Film Bulletin* commented:

> From the opening sequences to the very end the pace never flags, and the happenings on the German warship, with its cargo of bananas, have to be seen to be believed...A couple of catchy tunes add yet more zest to this joyous mixture, which is guaranteed to chase the worst dose of the blues away.[680]

The most enthusiastic responses were found in the popular press, which also charted Tommy Trinder's transition from the stage to the screen as it had done with Will Hay. This included discussion on how his comic persona would fit the movies: 'The Trinder sponsors offer him to you confident that his pleasant impudence – a neat blend of the Max Miller manner, the Jack Hubert chin – will put him up in the Formby class...'[681]

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[678] Aldgate and Richards, *Britain Can Take It*, p. 79.
[679] 'New Films in London: Farce and Rough Riding', *Times*, 9 December 1940.
[680] 'Sailors Three', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 8/82, (1940), p. 159.
[681] In article titled, 'Will Hay to Teach Home Defence Men How to See the Stars', *Daily Express*, 11 March 1940.

Jonah Barrington's review for the *Daily Express* indicated why the film was successful, and also evoked a Nelsonian trope:

> It was the Nelson spirit that did it all – the Nelson spirit in long glasses with ice... You found you'd been chuckling on and off for an hour and a quarter. And why? Because it's British, breezy and on top of the world. Because it's fun to see the Nazis chased with a hosepipe. Because it has good tunes (particularly Ned Gay's theme song "All Over the Place"). Mainly I think because it is the right film at the right moment.[682]

Although the film is not a straight musical, Trinder does sing, most successfully, as noted in the *Daily Express* review, in the opening song *All Over the Place*. This set the tone of the piece and described the stereotype of the wandering philandering sailor. It also highlighted the roots of the comedy in music hall as the song had parallels with *All the Nice Girls Love a Sailor*. First sung in 1905, this song was most associated with Hetty King, a male impersonator who during the First World War began performing in service uniforms. In spite of the some thirty-five intervening years the image of the sailor was remarkably consistent in both songs:

> He's all over the place,
> The ladies adore to get him ashore,
> He's theirs for the day,
> And then he's away,
> All over the place.
> (*All Over the Place)*

> Bright and breezy free and easy,
> He's the lady's pride and joy.
> Falls in love with Kate and Jane
> Then he's off to sea again
> *(All the Nice Girls Love a Sailor)*

Tommy and Johnny act out this stereotype of the sailor in pursuit of women, which leads to drunkenness as well as their missing the ship. The familiarity of this cheeky and largely affectionate view of the sailor may be seen to have allowed an acceptable interplay between the sexes precisely because its boundaries were already charted. The male could be predatory and ignore the protocols of courtship. He was abroad, or

[682] Jonah Barrington, 'Nelson Spirit Makes Tommy Trinder Take a Battleship', *Daily Express,* 6 December 1940.

at least aboard ship, and therefore not within the confines of British society. This play on 'difference', hinting at the idea that society abroad was less civilised than at home, provided a fantastic setting in which the desires of ordinary men could be explored. As Spicer comments, drawing upon George Orwell's analysis of the appeal of the rogue to an 'unofficial self': 'This unofficial self is cowardly, lazy, preoccupied with looking after Number One, and celebrating bodily pleasures, but is only 'a harmless rebellion against virtue'.[683]

In the film, however, Tommy is ultimately seen to conform by settling down with the respectable, girl-next-door, Jane. Jane, as the sister of new recruit Llewellyn, is a class above the other two sailors. Llewellyn, a wartime recruit, is nicknamed 'the Admiral' and is another stock character of the service film.[684] The presence of an intellectual from another class enabled another level of interplay between the classes other than that between officer and rating. Humour is derived from his attempts to fit in with the other sailors. Notably he does not chase the girls and his drunkenness is caused by his being over polite in not being able to refuse the enthusiastic guests at the wedding party, thus mocking British manners.

Ultimately the message of the film bears a similarity to some of the serious wartime drama where the whole group work, regardless of background come together with a common aim. Tommy becomes the common man as hero, rather than simply a common tar. The triumph of the common man against both the enemy and authority was a central element of the service comedy, and this is further discussed in the next case study.

[683] Spicer, *Typical Men*, p. 19, also drawing on George Orwell, 'The Art of Donald McGill', in *Collected Essays* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961), pp. 167-168

[684] The middle class recruits amongst working class groups are often given a nickname indicating a higher status: for example 'Admiral' Evans in *The Baby and the Battleship* and 'The Professor' in *Fiddler's Three* (1944).

6.2. *Bell-Bottom George* (1944)

6.2.1 Synopsis

George is working as a steward at the Senior Service Club in Porthampton having been rejected by the Navy several times on the grounds of ill health. In a series of slap stick accidents he manages to upset the Admiral, but befriends his Wren assistant, Pat. Away from the main action a German spy ring is seen to be in operation in the town under the cover of a shop. George goes in to the shop and notices a sound that the owner convinces him is being made by crickets.

When an air raid begins in the night he realises that his sailor chum, Jim Bennett, has borrowed his clothes and left his naval uniform. George puts on the uniform and while out searching for Bennett he is taken back to the naval base by the military police. Once there he entertains the sailors singing with his ukulele and is spotted by an officer who recruits him to play at a troop concert in London. The concert is recorded by the BBC and when George sees the sound department he realises that the noise of the supposed crickets is in fact that of a radio signal. On the train on the way back, in another case of mistaken identity, he is thought to be a member of the German spy ring. He proves his innocence, exposes the saboteurs and saves a newly built warship from being blown-up. He wins Pat's heart and the Admiral gratefully accepts George into the navy.

6.2.2. Reception

Bell-Bottom George was not considered the best of George Formby's output, but it was still expected to be popular. The trade magazine *Film Renter* commented: 'If one accepts the premise that nothing else matters in a Formby picture so long as George does his stuff, this one measures up to reliable box-office standards'.[685] Similarly the *Monthly Film Bulletin* remarked: 'For those who like Formby getting into scrapes and singing three or four songs, direction, production and supporting cast do not greatly

[685] 'Screenings: Bell-Bottom George', *Film Renter*, 22 December 1943.

matter – which in this case is just as well'.[686] This perhaps reflected some of the prejudice against the popular comedies, especially bearing in mind that Formby was a huge box office draw and the top male star from 1937 until 1943.[687] A 1940 *Daily Mirror* article about Formby as the top British star of 1940 (from a survey conducted by the *Motion Picture Herald*) noted however: 'Frankly I'm not surprised at Formby, for he provides a laugh from Cornwall to the Orkneys. In fact everywhere except the heart of the West End of London he's a sensation'.[688]

This may in part explain the lack of reviews of the film from the largely London based critics. Some of the popular comedies were not given West End releases.[689] This was indicative of a divide, partially to do with class, but also relating to differences in regional humour. Richards has argued that Lancashire was particularly well represented on screen (mostly through Formby and Gracie Fields) and that the difference in the presentation of humour was rooted in the development of music hall. He suggests that Lancashire humour contrasted with the trends in London, in being slow-building, anecdotal and based on character rather than fast patter and dialogue based.[690] This indicated a degree of regional diversity on screen, although ultimately the appeal was in the talent of the individual comic. A different key in regional diversity in the maritime comedy would come after the war in films such as *Whisky Galore* deliberately pitted the Scottish islanders against English bureaucracy.

Another reason for the lack of coverage of *Bell-Bottom George* was that it was made late in the war by which time fatigue with the service comedy may have been setting in. It was also clear in 1944 that the allies were winning and the need for the kind of morale boosters which had been received with such enthusiasm at the beginning of the war including Formby's own *Let George Do It* ('*Let George Do It* is clearly preposterous, but it is just right for the mood, and the moment'.[691]) were no longer necessary. In any case, the weary comments of the critics indicated the familiarity of scenarios that had been used in other Formby films. *Let George Do It* also involved a naval plot, where he ended up on a German submarine and in *Spare a Copper* he

[686] Bell-Bottom George, *Monthly Film Bulletin,* 11/21 (1944), p. 1.
[687] Richards, *Films and British National Identity,* p. 257.
[688] 'Rooney No1 Star', *Daily Mirror,* 1 January 1941.
[689] Spicer, *Typical Men,* p. 20.
[690] Richards, *Film and British National Identity*, p. 257.
[691] 'Let George Do It', *Observer,* 14 July 1940.

became a reserve policeman and foiled enemy agents who planned to blow up the propeller of a new warship.

In each of the films Formby is a working class man in whom the authorities do not see potential. In each he overcomes all odds and gains the respect of those who had previously discarded him. The little man seen to triumph over adversity was the central element of the films. As Richards comments: 'The point of universal identification was that if George could win through against adversity then anyone could. Class barriers thus prove no restriction'.[692]

The idea that Formby was representative of certain national characteristics was exemplified by a 1944 report in the *Manchester Guardian* that described him as 'our first authentic and strictly indigenous film comedian'.[693] The particular character he portrayed, the underdog, disadvantaged in background, brains and looks, superseded the settings of the films. Did it matter that this film had a naval setting? Certainly it is important in the sense that the naval plots of three of his wartime comedies reinforce both the popularity of the maritime as a subject and the interpretation that the navy was used as a standard of authority. In *Bell-Bottom George* it is the navy that recognises and brings out his talents: first in noting his gift as an entertainer, and secondly in accepting him into the service. The film also gives one of the very few portrayals of a Wren in a wartime movie. Pat is not simply a love interest: she is also seen to be efficient in her work in the service and willing to help him foil the enemy agents when George is not taken seriously. Representations of Wrens were more common in post-war films, although largely in subsidiary roles and these are discussed further in Chapter 6.

7. Maritime Comedies of the 1950s

Rayner has suggested that the impetus for the large number of service comedies made during the 1950s was the breadth of popular involvement in national service either during the war or subsequently. The number of sea comedies can also be seen in the

[692] Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 261.
[693] 'Picture Theatres', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 March 1944.

wider context of 1950s comedies, in which there was an emphasis upon institutions and bureaucracy and a tendency to satirize the traditional hierarchies.[694] Christine Geraghty, drawing upon the work of historian Harry Hopkins and sociologist Michael Young, suggests that this could be attributed to a perceived new meritocratic order, and to an increase in state intervention and bureaucracy, for example through the welfare state. The derivation of humour from these situations is outlined by Boyd-Bowman who asserts that 'much of the humour in these films revolves around maximum inefficiency, inept bureaucracy, and widespread insubordination'.[695] This scenario was particularly apparent in the late fifties comedy *Up the Creek* (1958). Here the wily crew of the mothballed HMS *Berkeley* moored in Suffolk run various businesses from a bakery to a laundry service in the local village using naval supplies, under the nose of their well-meaning but totally naive commander, Captain Fairweather. The posting of Fairweather to the *Berkeley* was a deliberate act of damage limitation by the Admiralty after a series of calamities caused by his obsession with building rockets. Although inept, naval authority is seen as benign, in the vein of the gentleman amateur, so the film again presents an affectionate rather than a damningly critical view of the navy.

Rayner also suggests that the characteristics of the war film underwent 'a transformation in the post-war trend of service based comedies,' and that 'their topicality may also be related to a surfeit of war films in circulation, leading to the genre's evolution into a phase of spoof and satire'. In evidence of this he draws only upon Ramsden's observation that *Carry on Sergeant* (1958) operates as a parody of *The Way Ahead* (1944).[696] In fact, if topicality had a part to play in the number of naval comedies produced after the war, it was rather as a continuation of an established pattern than as a departure from a previous tradition. Just as in the past the comedies continued to reference current issues. It was only in the comedies that nuclear armament was referred to, for example the premise of *Further Up the Creek* (1958) was that the navy was selling off obsolete vessels to make way for new nuclear powered ones. Rayner's assertion that these post war comedies were a

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[694] See Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and 'The New Look'* (London: Routledge: 2000), p. 56.
[695] Boyd-Bowman, *War and Comedy*, p. 39.
[696] Rayner, *The Naval War Film*, p. 72.

'transformation' of the naval film is flawed: it has been clearly shown that comedies were just as prolific in number, and had many of the same characteristics, between the wars. This was not a new way of presenting maritime Britain on film; it was a continuity of both setting and character types.

There were, however, some shifts in the naval comedies of the 1950s and 1960s. Just as in the serious naval dramas there was in some cases a shift back to films that centred primarily upon the officer class, such as *The Cruel Sea* and the *Battle of the River Plate.* The comedies, which up until the end of 1940s had broadly dealt with the lower deck, now included some examples that focussed on officers such as *Carry on Admiral* (1957).[697] The ending of national service in 1958 and the slow distancing of war service may also have laid the ground for historical naval comedies to emerge after 1960. Finally, although the tradition of using stage comedians such as Norman Wisdom (*Bulldog Breed,* 1960) and Charlie Drake (*Petticoat Pirates,*1961) continued, changes elsewhere in British popular culture made it a less prominent phenomenon and there were far fewer musical numbers in nautical films.

7.1 *The Baby and the Battleship* (1956)

7.1.1 Synopsis

The film is set aboard HMS *Gillingham*, which is undertaking peacetime manoeuvres with allied navies. Messmates Able Seaman Knocker White and Puncher Roberts while on shore leave in Naples become involved in a brawl in a city square cafe. In the confusion of the aftermath Puncher is left with the baby brother of Knocker's Italian girlfriend. Knocker does not make it back to the ship before it sails and Puncher is forced to take the baby on board with him. His fellow messmates all gradually become involved and organise a routine to care for the baby, who becomes increasingly difficult to conceal from the officers. During a diplomatic visit to the ship by a Marshal from an unnamed totalitarian state, the officers become aware of the baby's presence. As the ship is about to be 'sunk' in the naval exercises, the Captain saves face by declaring he must withdraw, as a sick baby needs to be taken to

[697] This was not part of the 'Carry On' series of films, but a comedy based on a switch of identities between two friends who get drunk, one a naval captain and the other a public relations officer.

shore. This earns him a medal from the Marshal, who admires the Captain for putting humanitarian concerns above military objectives. When they reach shore, the baby is returned to the parents and Knocker rejoins the ship with no repercussions for the sailors.

7.1.2 Reception

The film was a large-scale production, which received considerable Admiralty support which was recognised in the *News of the World* review: 'The Navy clearly had a big hand in the making of *The Baby and the Battleship*...and you'll come away feeling that Someone Very Important at the Admiralty retains a glorious sense of humour'.[698] This was a shift in the kind of film that the Admiralty was willing to support as they had previously eschewed frivolous portrayals and did not extend their co-operation to comedies made during the war. The navy, however, was by 1947 encountering problems in recruiting sufficient numbers of personnel. This was partly because the technological advances meant that they needed different kinds of recruits. The introduction of compulsory National Service did not solve this problem for the Admiralty because new recruits could not be given the required technical training in a short period of time. The year before *The Baby and the Battleship* was released the need to make the service more attractive in a time of full employment led to inducements such as improved pay and shorter service periods.[699] These factors may help to explain the change of policy at the Admiralty.

The overall response to the film was mixed, however, and it received several damning reviews. Criticism was mostly aimed at the predictability of the 'humour to be derived from such situations as the officer/ ordinary seaman relationship, the Cambridge intellectual who reads Freud and Berenson and language misunderstandings'.[700] The *Times* was particularly harsh in its criticism:

> This is a sad film – which is not to say that it may not be a popular one –if it is regarded as the best a formidable British team, with Mr John Mills, Mr

[698] 'The Baby and the Battleship', *News of the World*, 15 July 1956.
[699] James Callaghan, 'Vote 1. Pay. Etc., of the Navy and the Royal Marines', 385 H.C. Deb. 5s 15 March 1955, col. 1131-6.
[700] 'The Baby and the Battleship', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 23/271 (1956), p. 102.

> Richard Attenborough, and Mr Michael Horden in the cast, can do...The Baby and the Battleship might have done as a two reeler in the very old days of the silent film; it will not do as an elaborate, full length production in Eastman Colour, produced with the help and co-operation of no less an organization than the Royal Navy....[701]

This throwback to previous comedic style was seen in a more positive light in the *Daily Herald*, which commented: 'This excellent music hall material can be seen...in *The Baby and the Battleship...*'[702] and in the *Financial Times*:

> It is the sort of thing that Ian Hay and Stephen King-Hall[703] used to write between the wars – crammed with nice girls and sailors of all sorts, from teak-headed admirals and commanders like advertisements for aftershave, to conniving cockney stewards and mock lugubrious matelots. All excellent fun and no less so for being quite untrue to any naval life that was ever on land or sea.[704]

The recognition of the influence of the pre-war era on the film was not restricted to the *Baby and the Battleship*. Reviews for *Further Up the Creek* also mentioned a debt to the 1930s. The *Evening Standard* commented that: 'The antecedents of *Further Up the Creek* – apart from the uproarious predecessor *Up the Creek* – are deep in the 1930s comedies of the kind made by the late Will Hay'.[705] Even though the maritime comedies fitted in with the trends of 1950s cinema in their questioning of masculinity and bureaucracy, contemporaries recognised that there had been a remarkable continuity in their style and subjects.

In *The Baby and the Battleship* Knocker and Puncher between them showed all the traditional attributes of the 'Jack Tar' figure. Before the ship docks Knocker is seen showing his messmates a wad of photographs of the girls he has in different ports, and when they go on shore leave he heads off directly to meet his Italian girlfriend and go drinking. Puncher is less confident with the girls, and eschews drink (from previous bad experiences) but has a tendency to brawl and was a naval boxing champion.

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[701] 'High Jinks on the High Seas: The Baby and the Battleship and other New Films', *Times*, 16 July 1956.
[702] Anthony Carthew, 'The Baby and the Battleship', 13 July 1956.
[703] Hay and King-Hall were scriptwriters of either the film or original adapted play for the following maritime films: *The Middle Watch* (1931); *The Midshipmaid* (1932); *Admirals All*, (1935); *The Middle Watch* (1940); *Carry on Admiral* (1957); *Girls at Sea* (1958).
[704] Peter Forster, 'The Baby and the Battleship', *Financial Times*, 16 July 1956.
[705] 'Zany Navy', *Evening Standard*, 16 October 1958.

Durgnat places the *Baby and the Battleship* in a group of films that he considers a 'British speciality' and that are an 'intriguing counterpart to the stiff upper lip, is the film based on the exasperations of minor social conflicts and everyday routines'.[706] In this case the routine efficiency of the Royal Navy is compromised by the presence of a baby on board. This is, however, turned around so that the usual naval competence and discipline is turned into an effective regime to care for the child. In addition the masculinity of the sailors, so emphasised in the opening scenes, is subverted by their being forced to play a maternal role.

The comedy thus relied on themes that were already familiar. Primarily it played on relationship of power between classes, and the mixing of class within the lower ranks. The exploration of different classes thrown together was a device that had been used in wartime, most obviously, for example in *Millions Like Us* (1943). Although wartime naval films made much use of the new recruit, and newly formed crews the class divide was always between officers and ratings. In this case the film was set in peacetime and so the 'intellectual' amongst the able seamen was on National Service, providing the conflict between book-learning and practical experience.

Positive reviews of the film largely came from the popular press, as usual in the criticism of the comedy. Here the success of the film was undoubtedly the pairing of John Mills and Richard Attenborough:

> Richard Attenborough and John Mills are the great unsinkable of British films. How often have we seen them both in naval uniform. Sometimes the films are good. Sometimes not so good. But shipmates Attenborough and Mills always come sailing through with well trimmed performances.[707]

Between them, Attenborough and Mills donned naval uniforms in films sixteen times between 1932 and 1962 (three times together).[708] Nor were they strangers to the other

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[706] Raymond Durgnat, *A Mirror for England: British Movies from Austerity to Affluence* (New York: Praeger, 1971), p. 162.
[707] Ray Nash, 'Baby Ahoy', *Star*, 13 July 1956.
[708] John Mills: *Midshipmaid* (1932)*; Forever England; All Hands; In Which We Serve; We Dive at Dawn; This Happy Breed; Scott of the Antarctic; Morning Departure, Above Us the Waves; The Baby and the Battleship; The Valiant* (1962). Richard Attenborough: *In Which We Serve; Morning Departure; The Gift Horse; The Ship that Died of Shame.*

services, with appearances in at least twenty-two films in which they were in either the Army or Air Force up until 1969.[709] As Plain has argued, Mills in particular had already come to represent the 'everyman' and was widely seen as the archetypal Briton.[710] Anthony Carthew commented in the *Daily Herald* that, 'Whoever thought of taking Mills, the perpetual naval hero, and reducing him to the ranks wins an Illuminated Address from me. The perplexed little sailor is a riot'.[711] Here was another example of the degree to which the understanding of these films was reflexive, not only in terms of subject matter and approach, but also through the actors involved. Arguably, the culmination of this reflexivity was *Oh! What a Lovely War* (1969) directed by Attenborough and featuring Mills along with many of the actors associated with the portrayal of military heroism in the films of the 1940s and 1950s.[712] The film parodied both popular attitudes to the First World War as well as the way it had been represented on film from industries very beginnings in the fairground. The Navy, however, received barely a mention.[713]

Unlike the stage play, and even the film of *Oh! What a Lovely War*, naval comedies remained benign, even in a period in which it became more commonplace to attack bureaucracy. Only in serious historical dramas did truly critical portraits of the naval officers emerge, for example in films such as *Mutiny on the Bounty* and *HMS Defiant. The Baby and the Battleship* was typically good-humoured. In common with other naval comedies, the only officer that verges on being a bully is a petty officer, CPO Blades, while the senior officers are generally seem as distant, but ultimately fair. As the Captain uses the presence of the baby to his advantage to save face, he consequently does not reprimand the sailors for bringing him aboard in the first place. This may have been because, as mentioned in the second chapter, the navy never

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[709] John Mills: *O.H.M.S* (1937)*; Cottage to Let* (1941)*; The Big Blockade* (1942)*; Information Please* (1944)*; Victory Wedding* (1944)*; The Way to the Stars* (1945)*; Waterloo Road* (1945)*; The Colditz Story* (1955)*; Dunkirk* (1958)*; Ice-Cold in Alex* (1958); *I Was Monty's Double* (1958)*; Tunes of Glory* (1960)*; Tiara Tahiti*, (1962); *Operation Crossbow* (1965)*; King Rat* (1965)*; Oh What a Lovely War* (1969). Richard Attenborough: *A Matter of Life and Death* (1946)*; Private's Progress* (1956)*; Sea of Sand* (1958)*; Danger Within* (1959)*; The Great Escape* (1963)*; Guns at Batasi;* (1964).

[710] See Plain, *John Mills and British Cinema*.

[711] Anthony Carthew, 'The Baby and the Battleship', *Daily Herald*, 13 July 1956.

[712] For example: Jack Hawkins and Kenneth More, David Lodge (*Cockleshell Heroes*, 1955)*;* Guy Middleton (*Trust the Navy*, 1935, *For Freedom*, 1940, *The Sea Shall Not Have Them*, 1954); Vincent Ball, (*The Battle of the River Plate*, 1956, *Danger Within*, 1959), Cecil Parker, (*Sons of the Sea*, 1939, *Ships With Wings*, 1941, *I Was Monty's Double*, 1958)

[713] Also see discussion in Todman, *Myth and Memory*, pp. 65-66.

attracted the kind of criticism that was levelled against the army after the First World War. Also as the Mass Observation survey on civilian attitudes towards the services indicated naval leaders were seen to be more in tune with their men than leaders of either the army or airforce. Class divisions as portrayed in the comedies were not a matter of bitterness but a device to gently mock difference, turning them in to a comedy of manners rather than a serious social critique.

8. Conclusions

The maritime comedies offered an alternative view to the serious naval dramas and remained remarkably popular throughout the period, especially with working class audiences. Arguably the comedies had more in common with ordinary experiences both of war and peace: in that they often dealt with situations which would apply to wider sections of the community than naval officers. This was particularly the case in the Second World War when the films offered a view of the experience for new recruits, or after the war in looking at the National Service man. The comedies often looked at the ordinary man and how he fitted in, a subject rarely considered in the more serious naval dramas.

James Chapman has argued in respect of Formby films during the Second World War that some comedy films 'can be thought to have tangential propaganda content.'[714] This chapter may suggest that their role is actually more central. Stars made service comedies deliberately to support the war effort. The overall message of the comedy films and the views represented about the navy, despite wider social inclusion, promoted an almost identical message to the serious naval dramas: they at the very least reinforced propaganda messages. The Admiralty, after the war, evidently considered it worth their while to invest in *The Baby and the Battleship.* Although Mass Observation surveys show that people did not consider Formby films to be propaganda at the time, Pronay has argued (with regards to the dissemination of news propaganda) that 'the better its work is done the less it is noticed and discussed by contemporaries.'[715] Perhaps this is the case with the wartime comedies which indeed

[714] Chapman, *The British at War*, p. 253.
[715] Pronay, 'The News Media at War', p. 173.

attracted the least attention critically at the time despite being one of the most popular genres. Equally they have been relatively neglected by historians since: despite a willingness to seriously engage with issues of national identity in respect of later television sit-coms.

The comedies frequently responded very quickly to current events or trends in filmic portrayals of maritime themes. The films were usually made from the point of view of the lower deck and encompassed a wider range of characters than the naval dramas, but did not necessarily offer a more liberal view. Women for example remained largely upon the periphery as girlfriends or sex objects. This in fact was increasingly seen in the 1950s comedies.

These comedies can only fully be understood by appreciating their antecedents: not only their roots in music hall performances, but, at an even deeper level, the historical continuity of 'Jack Tar'. A fuller consideration of the naval comedy on screen demonstrates that the material produced in the 1950s was strongly traditional: indeed, it could be argued that it depended on the audience's recognition, even at an unconscious level, of these tropes in order to hit home. What stands out in comedic representations is the remarkable consistency in the portrayal of the navy on film between 1900 and 1960. This held true in terms of subject and style, as well as in character portrayals and the embracing of the social and cultural status quo.

Chapter 6: The Cruel Sea

1. Introduction

This chapter concentrates on the post-war period from 1946 to 1960: a time of transition in which films were made using both traditional techniques and formats and those of the 'new wave'. The chapter makes four arguments. First, that although many maritime films were seen to embrace new modes of representation, a core of movies drew upon the style and subject matter of pre-war films. Second, that it was this latter category that tended to be amongst the best-received. Third, the chapter argues that, in comparison to the time periods already considered in this thesis, in the decade and a half after the Second World War, maritime films that were not comedies dealt much less frequently with current issues within the Royal Navy and the maritime industries; but were often concerned with contemporary social debates. Fourth, the chapter suggests that whereas some film historians have identified a shift in representation within the war films of the 1950s, these were in fact already established as elements of the naval film when the period began.

The chapter gives an overview of the film industry, before considering the frequencies and subjects of the maritime films in this period. The subsequent case studies are divided into three themes. First, the Royal Navy in peacetime, represented in *Morning Departure* (1950) and *The Ship that Died of Shame* (1955). Second, films set in the Second World War, which were part of the large number of war films made in the period. The films considered here are *The Battle of the River Plate* (1956) and *The Cruel Sea* (1953). Finally, the chapter turns to depictions of the merchant marine in *A Night to Remember* (1958) and *Passage Home* (1955).[716] These films have been chosen not only to enable comparison, but also to demonstrate the combination in this period of a significant number of films that followed the narrative tradition of the naval film, with others that more fully embraced contemporary developments and cinematic pre-occupations.

[716] Methodologically it is not ideal that three of these films were directed by Roy Ward Baker. Nevertheless, following the process already established in this thesis, they have been chosen on the basis of their content, not their direction. In addition a number of other 1950s films are examined elsewhere in thesis.

2. Historiography

The first academic treatments of 1950s British films of the 1950s tended to dismiss them as dull,[717] with the period 'commonly characterised as the era in which the national cinema retreated into quaintly comic evocations of community or into nostalgic recollections of the war'.[718] Since 2000 this position has been readdressed, most notably in works by Sue Harper and Vincent Porter[719] and by Christine Geraghty[720] that take a broad view of the decade. A large number of articles deal specifically with post-war cinematic depictions of the Second World War, including some consideration of naval war films.[721] From a specifically maritime perspective both MacKenzie[722] and Rayner[723] have chapters in their work considering the post-war naval film. Films about the navy, but not set in Second World War, have received less attention unless discussed in terms of particular directors or other themes.[724] When referenced in the general works on the 1950s and 1960s, they are not analysed as a specifically maritime group, except by Rayner, with his focus on films set in war time. Nowhere are non-naval maritime films considered collectively, although many are referenced in general works. *A Night to Remember* has received particular attention as part of the wide body of literature on the *Titanic* disaster of

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[717] See Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 145, Andrew Higson in the foreword to Paul Quinn, *B Films as a Record of British Working Class Preoccupations in the 1950s* (Lewiston, Edward Mellen Press, 2008) p. ii and Harper and Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p. 1.

[718] Ian MacKillop and Neil Sinyard, *British Cinema of the 1950s: A Celebration* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 2.

[719] Harper and Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s.*

[720] Christine Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties: Gender, Genre and the 'new look'* (London: Routledge, 2000).

[721] Ramsden, 'Refocusing The People's War', pp. 35-63; Nicholas Pronay, 'The British Post-Bellum Cinema: A Survey of the Films Relating to World War II made in Britain between 1945 and 1960', *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*, 8/1 (1998), pp. 39-54; Penny Summerfield, 'War, Film, Memory: Some Reflections on War Films and the Social Configuration of Memory in Britain in the 1940s and 1950s', *Journal of War and Culture Studies*, 1/1 (2008), pp. 15-23; Neil Rattigan, 'The Last Gasp of the Middle Class: British War Films of the 1950s, in Wheeler Winston Dixon (ed.), *Reviewing British Cinema 1900-1992: Essays and Interviews* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), pp. 143-52; Andy Medhurst, '1950s War Films', in Hurd, *National Fictions*, pp. 35-39.

[722] MacKenzie, British *War Films*, pp. 129-158.

[723] Rayner, *The Naval War Film.*

[724] For example *The Ship that Died of Shame* is discussed at some length in Tim O'Sullivan, 'Not Quite Fit for Heroes: Cautionary Tales of Men at Work – *The Ship that Died of Shame* and *The League of Gentlemen*', in Alan Burton, Tim O'Sullivan and Paul Wells (eds), *Liberal Directions: Basil Dearden and Post-War British Film Culture* (Trowbridge: Flick Books, 1997), p. 173.

1912; in particular in Richards' *The Definitive Titanic Film: A Night to Remember*[725] and in Bergfelder and Street's edited collection, *The Titanic in Myth and Memory*.[726]

3. British Cinema 1946-1960

This was the last period in which the cinema still drew a mass audience as it faced increasing competition from television and other leisure activities. Audience figures dropped by a third over the course of the 1950s but by 1959 there were still 14.5 million visits to the cinema per week. As Ramsden points out, this figure exceeded the number of homes owning televisions and nearly equalled circulation figures of the national newspapers combined.[727]

The 1950s is a difficult era to characterise because, as Harper and Porter identify, it was:

> …essentially a period of transition for the British film industry, and such periods are usually marked by a struggle between old fashioned 'residual' artistic forms and those newer, 'emergent' types which confer status upon their consumers.[728]

Plain observes that: 'Across a wide variety of genres, from comedy to crime, British films worked to contain the symbols of progress within the structures of conformity'.[729] This struggle is clearly seen in a comparison of the work of Michael Balcon at Ealing studios with the emergent 'British New Wave' cinema. Balcon was committed to a cinema that promoted national identity with many of the values that were familiar in the productions of the Second World War:[730]

> Britain as a leader in social reform in the defeat of social injustices and a champion of civil liberties. Britain as a patron and parent of great writing, painting and music; Britain as a questing explorer, adventurer and trader;

[725] Jeffrey Richards, *The Definitive Titanic Film: A Night to Remember* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003).
[726] Tim Bergfelder & Sarah Street (eds), *The Titanic in Myth and Memory: Representations in Visual and Literary Culture* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2004).
[727] Ramsden, 'Re-focusing the People's War', p. 36.
[728] Harper and Porter, *British Cinema in the 1950s,* p. 1.
[729] Plain, *John Mills and British Cinema*, p. 140.
[730] Richards, *Films and British National Identity*, p. 133.

> Britain as the home of great industry and craftsmanship; Britain as a mighty military power standing alone and undaunted against terrifying aggression.[731]

As Harper and Porter point out, Balcon, along with Rank and Reith, 'all thought that social progress had to come from a benevolent moral order which required due deference from the worker,' and 'It was not until the end of the decade that the industry produced more explicit celebrations of working class energy and new cultural forms'.[732] These new forms were to be found in productions such as *Room at the Top* (1959) and *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* (1960), which were committed to realism and a documentary approach to the young working classes. In respect of this Ramsden highlights the number of contemporary critics who saw war films as old fashioned. They 'were socially conservative in a way that clashed with the more demotic world of Angry Young Men, and they encouraged irresponsible attitudes to future warfare'.[733]

The double case studies in this chapter have been chosen to enable an exploration of this conflict. They contrast films that clearly derive from pre-war and wartime forebears, with those more representative of the cinema peculiar to the 1950s.

4. Frequencies

At the box office it was the war film and comedies that were the most successful overall genres of the 1950s.[734] Commentators on this period have emphasised the numbers of war films that were produced at this time: figures collated by Pronay and Ramsden suggest that between 80 and 100 such films were made between 1946 and 1965.[735] Of these Rayner contends that portrayals of the Royal Navy outnumbered those dedicated to the other services.[736]

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[731] Ibid., Quoted from *Kinematograph Weekly*, 11 January 1945, p. 163.
[732] Harper and Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p. 267.
[733] Ramsden, 'Refocusing the Peoples War', p. 40.
[734] Harper and Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p. 268.
[735] Ramsden, 'Refocusing the People's War', p. 45, Pronay, *The British Post Bellum Cinema*, p. 39.
[736] Rayner, *The Naval War Film*, pp. 54-55.

Contemporary reviews frequently remarked on the number of maritime films being produced, and rarely made a distinction between those set in wartime and those that were not, or between those dealing with the wartime Royal Navy as opposed to the wartime merchant marine. For example, in a review of the merchant shipping tale *Passage Home* the *Daily Mail* commented: 'British picture has another go at the ever-cruel, ever popular sea'.[737] There was a sense of weariness in some of the reviews, such as in Punch's review of *The Cruel Sea* which claimed that*:* 'in all its essentials it is the typical naval war story that we have been used to since 1940'.[738] It should be noted that while contemporary reviewers saw 'sea' films as a group they have rarely been considered since as a body of film.

Reviewers certainly had the impression that there were an unusually high number of maritime films, although a comparison with the pre-war period shows that the frequency was very similar. Graph 1 shows both the frequency of fictional maritime films made between 1895 and 1970, and the break down between those about the Royal Navy and other maritime subjects.

The graph shows that the number of maritime films made in the 1950s was in fact roughly comparable to the number made in the period before and during the war. Films featuring the Royal Navy rather than other maritime subjects were less numerous than in the wartime years but constant with the numbers made between 1930 and 1939. Much emphasis has been placed on the number of military films made in the 1950s, but the graph demonstrates that, in the case of the Royal Navy at least, the frequency of these films broadly reflected that in the pre-war period. Just as after the First World War, after the Second World War there was a similar dip in productions immediately after hostilities followed by a proliferation of maritime subjects.

[737] 'Passage Home', *Daily Mail,* 21 April 1955.
[738] 'The Cruel Sea', *Punch,* 8 April 1953.

5. Overview of Maritime Films 1946 -1960

Chart 1 shows that in this period films were almost equally divided in subject between those on the Royal Navy and those on other maritime themes. Most of the films on the Royal Navy were not set in the Second World War. The principal explanation for this is the large number of naval comedies which were almost exclusively set contemporaneously as previously discussed. The non-naval films covered the spectrum from shipbuilding, fishing, cruise liners and smugglers to cargo ships. The part played by the merchant marine in the Battle of the Atlantic was almost entirely absent from the post-war cinematic portrayals of the Second World War. The only significant portrayal of a merchant marine officer in a 1950s wartime film was Captain Dove in *The Battle of the River Plate,* although the thrust of the film focuses on the actions of the Royal Navy and the German captain of the *Graf Spee.* The Merchant Marine was only implicitly present in films such as *The Cruel Sea*, where all focus was on the Royal Navy's responses to the Battle of the Atlantic. Despite their contemporary settings,[739] the naval films that were not set in the Second World War did not confront the conflicts in which the navy was involved in the post-war period.[740] The exception to this was the *Yangtse Incident,* based on the exploits of the sloop HMS *Amethyst* whilst detailed as a guard ship for the British Embassy in Nanjing during the Chinese Civil War in 1949.[741] No other maritime films in this period dealt explicitly with the Cold War, Suez, the fallout of Empire or issues of recruitment. Instead a large number dealt with the recasting of the Second World War or returned to the themes of the pre-war maritime film.

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[739] There were a few examples of historical naval films such as *Scott of the Antarctic* and the Anglo-American production of *Horatio Hornblower RN.*

[740] It can be argued that the continuation of the celebration of British victories and spirit in the war films, and that the beliefs of filmmakers such as Balcon in promoting British identity was Cold War propaganda. See Tony Shaw, *British Cinema and the Cold War: The State, Propaganda and Consensus* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2001).

[741] The film was a flop with audiences which recent historians have attributed to the effect on the public feeling after the Suez crisis. See MacKenzie, *British War Films,* p. 147-8, Harper and Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s,* p. 255. This did not stem the tide of maritime films, or stop some of them being successful.

Graph 1. Total fictional films on maritime subjects, 1895-1970, broken down by those about the Royal Navy and those about other maritime subjects.

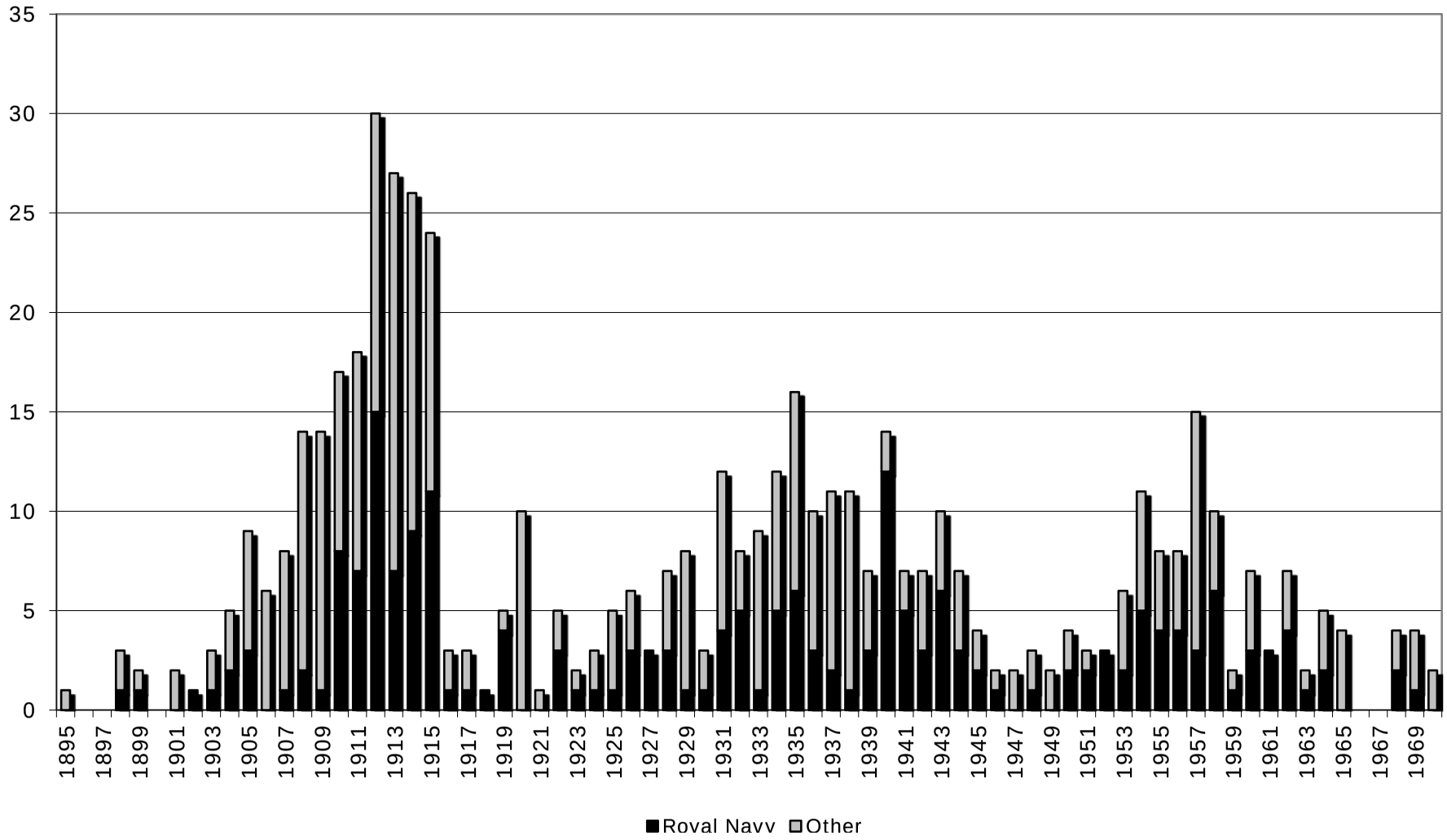
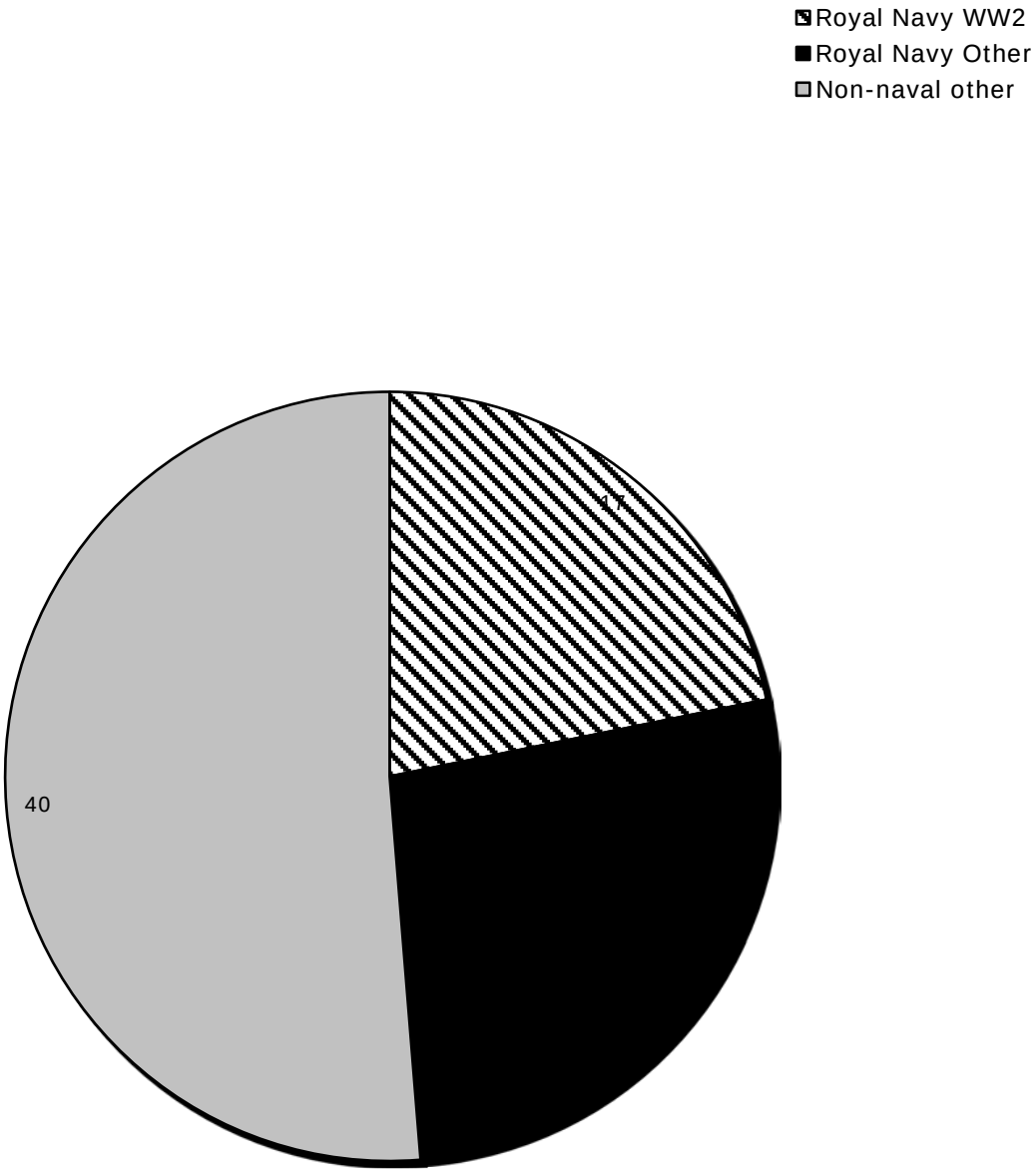


Chart 1. Breakdown of Maritime Subjects 1946-1960



5.1. Remakes of pre-war films

Not only were a similar number of films made between the Second World War and the early sixties as had been made between the wars; there were also several films that revisited the same subjects or remakes of the same stories, including: *Titanic,*[742] *Scott of the Antarctic*, *Brown on Resolution* and Elizabethan dramas.[743]

Ponting's documentary film of Scott had been accorded national significance in 1929 when it was chosen as the first item for the new Empire Library of British films.[744] Charles Frend's 1948 film *Scott of the Antarctic* was a faithful adaptation of Scott's journal and was, like naval films of the 1930s, chosen for the Royal Film Performance of 1949. Plain's research has shown that although the film attracted much negative criticism, some sections of the popular press felt that to criticise the film itself was unpatriotic.[745] This was reminiscent of the reviews of the films of Drake which had praised them on the basis of their inclusion of a national hero and ignored any failings of the production. The film was also representative of a group of films made in the 1950s that dealt essentially with heroic failures, of which other maritime examples were *Dunkirk* and *A Night to Remember*. *Dunkirk,* although not awarded a command performance, nevertheless had a royal premiere attended by the Queen and Prince Philip.[746] All three films were testaments to the strength of British character in the face of adversity, and perhaps could be seen as a reassertion of aspects of British national identity as the country rebuilt itself in the aftermath of war; and amongst the

[742] Discussed in a later case study.

[743] There was for example another small wave of Elizabethan dramas such as: *Young Bess* (1953, US)*; The Virgin Queen* (1955, US) and *The Sword and the Rose* (1953, US/ UK)made at the time of the second Elizabeth's coronation, perhaps in the hope of a second golden age. Also see discussion in Billie Melman, *The Culture of History: Uses of the English Past, 1800-1953*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 186-214.

[744] See chapter 2.

[745] Plain, *John Mills and British Cinema,* p. 113.

[746] 'The Queen and Philip Remember Dunkirk', *Daily Express,* 21 March 1958.

prevalent trend of films that questioned the nature of masculinity.[747] Although the Second World War is often perceived as a dividing line in film, as in much else, here was a core of films in which subject, theme, approach and institutional response were effectively continuous between the pre-war and post-war periods.

5.2 Women in 1950s Films

As indicated in the introduction to this thesis, women were generally absent from maritime films, thanks principally to the nature of the stories and situations they portrayed. In the 1950s this became even more apparent because of a general trend towards a concentration on male groupings. This was noted in the press at the time, for example in *Picture Post*, which cited maritime films in particular:

> There is a popular superstition abroad that British film producers don't like women in their films. While they may deny this – and actually advance proof to the contrary – there can be no doubt that there is nothing to fill a British film director with greater pride than an assignment involving an all-male cast. Usually these all-male casts which tend to involve Dirk Bogarde, Dickie Attenborough, or/ and Donald Sinden – are all at sea. (We use this phrase in its literal sense). *The Sea Shall not Have Them* and *Above Us The Waves* are recent examples of sea epics in which sex, even in its familiar manifestation of the Starlet with the Big Future, dares not raise its head'.[748]

Women in the films made during the war had been most commonly the wives and girlfriends of naval personnel and their chief role was in supporting their men and in representing the sacrifices that were being made by civilians as well as servicemen. The most clearly drawn picture of this was in *In Which We Serve.* As the case studies will show, the portrayal of women changed after the war to include female romantic interests as disruptive rather than as supportive figures. Another significant change in how women were represented related to the portrayal of female personnel in the Royal Navy. Wrens as a group had been excluded from films made during the

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[747] See also Plain, *John Mills and British Cinema*, pp. 112-117. She contends that the film was out of step with the prevailing trends of the comic ensemble in films such as *Passport to Pimlico.* There is a problem in that there appear to be so many trends in 1950s film, for each one it seems possible to find a contradiction. Nevertheless in terms of maritime films there was the group identified that focussed on past disaster turned to a national triumph of character, and whether resonant or not with the public each attracted a great deal of press attention.

[748] 'Girl at Sea With Thirty Men', *Picture Post*, 20 April 1955.

Second World War with the exception of a few comedies. Immediately after the war two films that concentrated on them emerged: *Perfect Strangers* (1945)[749] and *Piccadilly Incident* (1946).

Perfect Strangers was a light comedy about a dull husband and wife who joined the navy and the Wrens respectively for duration of the war. Both broaden their horizons through service and this revitalises their relationship. *Piccadilly Incident* was a reversal of the old 'Enoch Arden' narrative[750] whereby a mariner returns after years at sea to find his wife remarried: in this case it is the Wren who is shipwrecked, presumed dead, and returns to find her Royal Marine husband remarried. The film was in general seen as disappointing by reviewers[751] and some felt that the portrayal of the Blitz should now be given a harder and more realistic edge.[752] That the lead female character was a servicewoman, not a civilian, was, however, significant.

Whilst *Piccadilly Incident* and *Perfect Strangers* were isolated examples of Wrens as lead characters, they also became the romantic interest in a number of other naval films: notably *The Cruel Sea*, *The Silent Enemy* and *Sink the Bismarck!*. The Wren as romantic interest did not disrupt the male group: as insiders they knew the navy's needs.[753] Their role was therefore secondary, but nevertheless in each of these films they were positive portrayals of efficient female officers and highlighted an aspect of the wartime navy that had hitherto been neglected.

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[749] This was released after hostilities had ended in Europe.

[750] This plot was the basis of Alfred, Lord Tennyson's 1864 poem *Enoch Arden*. It had been used as the basis for many productions (mostly Hollywood), for example: *After Many Years* (1908, US); *Enoch Arden* (1914); *A Modern Enoch Arden* (1916, US); *My Favourite Wife* (1940, US).

[751] See 'Piccadilly Incident', *Times,* 26 August 1946, and 'Picture Theatres', *Manchester Guardian,* 21 January 1946.

[752] See for example, 'Piccadilly Incident', *Daily Worker,* 23 August 1946.

[753] See also Spicer's comments on *The Cruel Sea* in *Typical Men,* p. 37.

6. *Morning Departure* (1950) and *The Ship that Died of Shame* (1955)

Morning Departure and *The Ship that Died of Shame* are both set in peacetime, shortly after the end of the war. They are markedly different in atmosphere with *Morning Departure* in many respects resembling the structure and subject of the wartime film. Overall it demonstrates a continuity of naval tradition and bravery, although there are elements of the film that deal with the navy's readjustment to peacetime. *The Ship that Died of Shame* was one of a cluster of films that dealt with the difficulties of combatants adjusting to civilian life, and their search for something to replace the camaraderie and purposeful work of wartime service. A sense of loss of structure for the servicemen without the guiding principles of naval life permeates the film, but by 1955 many of those who watched it already considered this theme outdated.

6.1 Morning Departure

6.1.1 Synopsis

The film begins with members of the crew of the submarine HMS *Trojan* taking leave of their wives and girlfriends to undertake a routine post-war exercise. The submarine is hit by a stray electronic mine and sinks to the sea-bed with only 12 of the 65-strong crew remaining alive. Their plan is for eight of the survivors to escape through the conning tower and gun hatch, while the remaining men will have to flood the main compartment before they can get out. This plan is thwarted when it is discovered, after the first four leave, that the blast also destroyed a reserve of oxygen sets. With only four undamaged sets, lots are drawn for the next group of men to go. The focus of the film is on the characters behaviour under stress, and particularly between Stoker Snipe and Captain Armstrong.[754] The remaining four await rescue from a salvage vessel and divers manage to install an air pipe and begin to lift the submarine. In the meantime one of the officers falls ill and dies. Bad weather ensues and the

[754] Snipe is played by Richard Attenborough playing a similar role to *In Which We Serve*, as a coward who redeems himself through the nurturing of his captain, in this case played by John Mills, which also reminds the audience of *In Which We Serve.*

attempt to lift the submarine has to be abandoned. The last three men realise that they are going to die. As the air begins to run out Armstrong reads the Naval Prayer.

6.1.2 Reception

The film was very well received by audiences and won near universal praise from the critics.[755] Overwhelmingly they regarded it as a display of the best British attributes both in terms of filmmaking and national character. For example the *Daily Worker* thought that *Morning Departure:* 'possesses those qualities which are particularly associated with the best British films, sincerity, humour, restraint and above all integrity'.[756] The *Daily Graphic* believed that it was 'a film that pays tribute to the submarine service and does credit to the British film industry,'[757] and the *Standard* enthused: 'This is a magnificent picture. Not only is it a tribute to the Navy, but it revives in any doubting mind that there is no people on earth as dear and as wonderful as the British'.[758] This feeling seems to have emanated in part from the fact that it was a maritime film, for example in *The Monthly Film Bulletin*:

> The sea is, traditionally, the finest heritage of the British people. A story of heroism at sea is destined to stir the spirit of adventure in the faintest heart, and over the past few years we have seen a number of films with this theme.[759]

In the analysis with which this thesis opened, C. A. Lejeune of the *Observer* took this interpretation further in an attempt to explain the British fascination with the sea:

> There is something odd and extraordinarily heart-warming about the way a story of ships and the men who serve in them will stir in an Englishmen. His experience of the sea may have been limited to a trip from Blackpool to Fleetwood, down the Thames to Margate, from Southampton to the Isle of Wight, but the atavistic feeling remains. It is not the fascination that people feel for flying...It is a much heavier and more racial attachment, and nobody can quite explain today, except on the grounds of heredity, why it continues to operate. But there is no doubt that it does operate: and any British producer who applies himself honestly to a film or a play about the Navy can count on a flow of feeling from his actors, and a resultant flow of sympathy from his audience. The salt in our blood will do the rest.[760]

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[755] See Geoff Mayer, *Roy Ward Baker,* p. 106.
[756] 'Morning Departure' *Daily Worker,* 25 February 1950.
[757] 'Morning Departure', *Daily Graphic,* 24 February 1950.
[758] 'The Film: Morning Departure', *Standard,* 23 February 1950.
[759] 'Morning Departure', *Monthly Film Bulletin,* 17/194 (1950), p. 25.
[760] C.A. Lejeune, 'The Salt in Our Blood', *Observer,* February 24, 1950.

The reviews were reminiscent of those of some of the pre-war films in that they emphasised that a British production about the sea was automatically worthy of attention solely because of its subject matter.

The film was made more poignant by the coincidence that the submarine HMS *Truculent* sank during peacetime operations just weeks before the film was released, with the loss of 63 lives. The incident led to a discussion of whether the film should be shown at all between the producers and the Admiralty[761], and it was consequently released with a caption at the beginning,

> This film was completed before the tragic loss of HMS *Truculent* and earnest consideration has been given as to the desirability of presenting it so soon after this grievous disaster. The producers have decided to offer the film in the spirit in which it was made, as a tribute to the officers and men of HM Submarines and to the Royal Navy of which they form a part.

The loss of the *Truculent* may in part explain the tone of the reviews. The expressions of patriotism elicited by this particular film were stronger than in response to any other naval film at the time.[762] Nearly all of them made reference to the disaster. As the *Star* put it: 'No finer, more heartfelt picture has ever come out of a British studio than this restrained account of a peacetime submarine disaster which, by coincidence, echoes the tragic headlines of a few weeks ago'.[763]

The film underlined the level of danger faced by the sailors of the Royal Navy in national defence whether in peace or war, and emphasised their courage and stoicism as the wartime films had done. In many respects the film resembled the naval films made during the war. First, in terms of structure, the film begins with members of the crew taking leave of their partners, as in the case of both *In Which We Serve* and *We Dive at Dawn*. ('It seems impossible to make a film about the Navy without the captain's wife smiling bravely through tears, saying what no naval officer's wife would, in fact, say', commented the reviewer in the *Times*).[764] Similarly, Captain

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[761] See MacKenzie, *British War Films*, p. 138.
[762] Plain notes that the film had a similar response to *Scott of the Antarctic* with 'much of the praise couched in explicitly national terms', Plain, *John Mills and British Cinema*, pp. 142-3.
[763] 'Morning Departure', *The Star*, 23 February 1950.
[764] 'Gaumont Cinema: Morning Departure', *Times*, 24 February 1950.

Armstrong's wife persuades him that he should leave the service to spend more time at home. This inner conflict between loyalty to the navy and family is a dilemma often posed in the naval film, perhaps most famously in Mrs Kinross' Christmas speech in *In Which We Serve*, when she claims that all naval wives have a rival in the form of their husbands' ships. In this case the dilemma is framed slightly differently, as the implication is that the Captain has done his public service, and now that it is peacetime he can concentrate on his home life and comfort. Armstrong is, however, clearly torn between these competing settings. This predicament echoes Milne-Smith's findings in her investigation into domesticity and gentlemen's clubs, as summarised by Colville: '...their allegiances were unevenly divided between two rival incarnations of domesticity: the first feminised, familial and apparently demanding; the second corporate, homosocial and apparently harmonious.'[765] Milne-Smith's analysis is the most common interpretation of the male group on film: the alternative domesticity offered by naval camaraderie and male bonding is seen as more harmonious and less problematic than the domestic life ashore. Colville's work on the actuality of living on board ship suggests that it produced a domestic situation that 'reflected male manoeuvring for power and status either within the officer corps or with reference to a spectrum of male-out groups.'[766] This less harmonious interpretation of power struggles within the male group was seldom seen as a reality on screen, with the exception of the merchant drama *Passage Home* discussed later in this chapter.

Second, there was a clear demarcation in terms of class and rank with humour provided by the lower deck, symptomatic of what Plain refers to as 'the re-emergence of a distinct officer hero'.[767] As director, Roy Ward Baker commented: 'even at the end of the film, the two officers are still officers and the two others are still the other ranks. They are never on a classless level, although they are on an *equal* level in that they know they are going to die at any moment'.[768] The grouping in this film centres on two officers and two ratings, whereas the later 1950s films tended to focus on

[765] Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity and Idealised Masculinity', p. 499, drawn from Amy Milne-Smith, 'A Flight to Domesticity? Making a Home in the Gentlemen's Clubs of London, 1880-1914', *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006), p.799.
[766] Ibid., p. 500.
[767] Plain, *John Mills and British Cinema*, p. 147.
[768] Roy Ward Baker, quoted in MacKenzie, *British War Films*, p. 137.

small groups of officers; a shift away from the more inclusive community of the later Second World War films.

Third, the efficiency of the navy is upheld as exemplary. Emphasis is placed on the fact that the loss of the submarine was not caused by human error, but rather by the sea and the weather. Geraghty has seen this aspect as indicative of a recasting of the war narrative for peacetime. She comments that '...the war film emphasises movement that is cramped and restricted by the physical environment. Indeed far from being a place of freedom and action, the environment becomes something that has to be fought against'.[769] She goes on to identify this as a major theme in *The Cruel Sea* and as present in other contemporary productions, such as *The Sea Shall Not Have Them.* In fact, as has already been seen in this thesis, for example in *Mutiny on the Bounty* and *San Demetrio London*, this struggle was at the heart of many maritime scenarios: the innate ability of British sailors to overcome and navigate the sea was part of the belief in maritime supremacy. If he failed to conquer the elements then the British seaman's ability to deal with adversity still set him apart. This was not a new element in films of the 1950s; rather, it became more apparent simply because fewer of them portrayed a human enemy. One of the attractions of the ship as a narrative device in all time periods is its combination of a closed, testing environment and the potential range of characters and roles: a combination that makes it a potent microcosm of wider society.[770]

The hub of the film is the small male group that is characteristic of the 1950s war film. Yet by the nature of the maritime sphere, male groups had always dominated such films. As previous chapters have shown, an absence of women or an unconvincing love story was often noted by reviewers. *Morning Departure*, however, stands out because family ties, and particularly sexual relationships, are portrayed as a source of tension rather than support. Within this 'true' British citizenship is located in the male group and it is the 'family' on the submarine that becomes the centre of attention and the locus for the resolution of personal insecurities. This is a distortion of Berlant and Warner's notion of 'national heterosexuality' configured through

[769] Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, pp. 180-81.

[770] The idea, for example, of 'the ship of state' and the metaphoric connection between a troubled ship and political turmoil was already established by the 1790s. See Moss, 'Class War and the Albatross: The Politics of Ships as Social Space and *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*', p. 33.

familial groups as it totally eclipses the female role in the projection of ideal British citizenship.[771] Only paternal and filial roles are seen as productive. Snipe, with the guidance of the captain, is able to overcome his cowardice. The second officer, who lost his confidence during the war when he survived another submarine disaster, finds a relative peace by staying behind to face potential death. This greater emphasis on the psychological aspects of war and service on the individual was usually absent from films of the 1940s. *Morning Departure* differed significantly from other naval films of the period, not because of its portrayal of attitudes, rank or gender, but because it dealt with a contemporary situation as well as wider social issues. In contrast, most naval films engaged with these themes only within the context of the Second World War.

6.2 *The Ship that Died of Shame*

6.2.1 Synopsis

Ex-naval captain, Bill Randall begins by narrating his wartime experience as Captain of *1087*, a motor torpedo boat. His second-in-command is George Hoskins and together they make a good team. Randall, newly married, loses his wife in an air raid and the ship becomes the only focus in his life. At the end of the war he tries his hand at boat building but the business fails and he attempts to return to his pre-war office job but there are no vacancies. On a visit to the services club he re-encounters Hoskins who asks him to join his small time smuggling operation, bringing luxuries not available in post-war Britain over from France. Randall is convinced when the opportunity to buy his beloved *1087* for the venture arises. They are also joined by Birdie, the coxswain of the ship, who jumps at the chance of working with Randall again. Hoskins puts the ship in Randall's name, and leaves him and Birdie to restore the vessel and thereafter maintain it, while he makes the business arrangements. Hoskins gets greedier, becomes involved with the criminal Major Fordyce and begins to arrange shadier cargoes, including arms and counterfeit cash. The ship seems to 'resent' this move and behaves erratically with such cargoes, shutting down its engines and becoming difficult to steer. Randall initially turns a blind eye to the

[771] Berlant and Warner, 'Sex in Public', p. 189.

increasingly dark deals, until Hoskins arranges for a fugitive ex-Nazi child killer to escape in the ship. The operation goes wrong and Hoskins murders the fugitive by pushing him overboard when the ship is stopped by customs. Randall wants to extricate himself from the business, but Hoskins points out that the ship is in his name and he is already implicated. Hoskins becomes more deeply involved when Fordyce shoots Brewster, a customs officer who is investigating the disappearance of the fugitive. He forces Randall and Birdie to join him and Fordyce in making an escape in the ship. Once at sea Fordyce is killed in a fight and Hoskins goes overboard after a struggle with Randall. *1087's* engines fail and Randall and Birdie are thrown clear as the ship, seemingly at the end of her tether, scuttles herself in a storm on the rocks.

6.2.2 Reception

The film was not particularly well received and was criticised for the anthropomorphising of the ship and for the apparent out-datedness of the subject of post-war readjustment. Press comments also indicated that a surfeit of maritime films was becoming tiresome. When it came to making the ship a character, critics were distinctly uncertain. The *Daily Herald* commented 'This is whimsy. Kipling got away with it. Will you take it now?'[772] and the *Daily Mail* wrote: 'To this straightforward melodramatic outline the author has added a subsidiary theme about ships having souls... I wasn't too happy about this, being the sort of infidel to whom the ship is merely a means of proceeding through water'.[773] The *Monthly Film Bulletin* criticised both the ship and time setting commenting:

> Nicholas Monsarrat's story, with its background of post-war shortages and servicemen's difficulties in coming to terms with civilian life, already looks dated. It somewhat uneasily combines its whimsical theme of the ship with a soul, rebelling against the criminal purposes she is made to serve, with a straightforward and unambitious story of crooks, gangs, smuggling adventures and fights at sea.[774]

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[772] 'The Ship that Died of Shame', *Daily Herald*, 22 April 1955. The reference is to Rudyard Kipling's short story 'The Ship that Found Herself' about a cargo-steamer on her maiden voyage, first published in the *Idler Magazine*, December (1895).
[773] 'The Ship that Died of Shame', *Daily Mail*, 21 April 1955.
[774] 'The Ship that Died of Shame', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 22/257 (1955), p.85.

Others, while still questioning this aspect of the film, felt that it worked: 'Is the fantasy of the ship's conscience too much to swallow? Not unless you're a stickler for reality, and this is handled very convincingly'[775] and 'Such sentimentalising over an inanimate object might easily have become tedious, but in fact, it is not overdone and the anthropomorphic qualities of the motor gun-boat help rather than hinder a most exciting and well acted story'.[776]

Even these comments, however, indicate that the fanciful deceit of the ship with a soul was out of kilter with the expectation of the naval film at this point. War films of the 1950s placed a significant emphasis on technological developments such as ASDIC and radar and the reliability of such equipment. A modern ship acting temperamentally did not fit this approach. In addition, as will be seen in later analysis of reactions to the other contemporary adaptation of a Nicholas Monserrat story, *The Cruel Sea*, documentary accuracy and verisimilitude, always a part of the depiction of the maritime industries and increasingly influential on naval fictional films, became a point of near obsession in the 1950s.[777] Whilst *The Ship that Died of Shame* begins by setting up such expectations, in the scenes set during the war it does not follow this through.

Reviewers also indicated that by 1955 they were growing weary of the sheer number of maritime films. For example:

> The Navy again: Competent and efficient as the Navy itself, the only thing really wrong with *The Ship that Died of Shame* is that you can have too much of a good thing. Here is yet another group of naval types in a motor gunboat grappling with the elements and with the sort of moral problems deemed suitable for ex-Naval personnel.[778]

Similarly in the *Daily Herald*: 'There is just now a flux of "wet films." Under the waves, over the waves and the sea splashing all around you,'[779] and *Shell Magazine* which commented, 'This is a good sea story, but let's hope the wave recedes a bit as

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[775] 'The Ship that Died of Shame', *Shell Magazine*, May 1955.
[776] 'The Ship that Died of Shame', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 April 1955.
[777] This is further discussed in the case studies of *The Battle of the River Plate* and a *Night to Remember*.
[778] 'The Navy Again', *Daily Worker*, 23 April 1955.
[779] 'The Ship that Died of Shame', *Daily Herald*, 22 April 1955.

we could get sea-sick'.[780] This reaction against a glut of maritime films had not been evident before the war, even though a similar number of films on the subject had been produced. This may have been because at that time maritime issues appeared to be more pertinent with the effects of the Depression on the shipping industry and with the concern of rearmament as war became imminent. In this period of full employment and peace, with the shipping industry's long term decline hidden by brief buoyancy, and in the midst of an array of films that retold the war, it was perhaps not surprising that interest in the maritime was beginning to wear thin.

6.2.3 *The Ship that Died of Shame* in Context with Films of the 1950s

The film was part of a cluster of British post-war films that dealt with the theme of ex-servicemen who found it difficult to re-adjust to a peacetime existence.[781] *The Ship that Died of Shame* is an isolated example of this sub-genre of the 'returning hero' in dealing with personnel of the Royal Navy with most dwelling on the other services. Macfarlane interprets this theme as a cinematic reaction to Britain's loss of 'prestige' through the breaking up of the Empire and to a perception that while Britain had won the war, she was losing the peace.[782] The film highlights the degree to which the folk memory of the difficulties of readjustment after the First World War continued to haunt servicemen returning from the Second: when Randall attempts to get his old job back, his ex-boss tells him of his own difficulty in settling for his old life when he returned from war and that this inspired him to found his own business.

The Ship that Died of Shame was purposely made as a meditation on post-war Britain and its producer later said that it 'represented what people had done with the country that they had inherited after the war. It was a sort of allegory'.[783] This aspect was not a matter of discussion in the contemporary reviews, but has recently been debated by

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[780] 'The Ship that Died of Shame' *Shell Magazine*, May 1955.

[781] For example: *To the Public Danger* (1947); *They Made Me a Fugitive* (1947). Other examples and a discussion of this cluster of films can be found in Brian MacFarlane, 'Losing the Peace: Some British Films of Postwar Adjustment', in Tony Barta (ed.), *Screening the Past: Film and the Representation of History* (Wesport Conneticut: Praeger, 1998), pp. 93-107.

[782] Ibid., p. 95. Also see the Epilogue for further discussion on the impact of Empire on the maritime film.

[783] Michael Relph (producer of the film) quoted in Brian McFarlane, *Sixty Voices* (London: BFI Publishing, 1992), p. 192.

film historians. Cook sees it as a film that criticises nostalgia for the 'good war'[784] which in his view: 'came to represent a fixed point in people's consciousness as a time when purpose and a sense of national identity were unproblematic, opposed to "now" with its conflicting and confusing claims on loyalties'.[785] This is contested by O'Sullivan, who expounds the opposite view, that the film was an endorsement of the 'good war' in which had developed a male camaraderie 'based on a clear and desirable order, on a harmony and moral purpose which underpinned the danger, spirit of adventure and the thrills of active service'.[786] It might be more accurate to specify that the film sees the camaraderie engendered by the war break down without a common purpose and the discipline of the navy. In the conditions of war Hoskins' tendency towards self-advancement and bragging are kept in check by the authority of the navy: as has already been noted the navy was seen on film to be able to 'shape' character. Without this, he has free reign and the boundaries of authority, and indeed class, become blurred and lead to disaster.[787]

O'Sullivan also contends that:

> ...this is a fable which succeeds in pitting masculinity and class against nation and conscience, setting old duties and ideals against new temptations and disillusions. Pivotal to the film is the metaphor of the ship, representing nation and the embodiment of approved moral codes and virtues, but in changing times and under different command.[788]

The ship can be seen as a metaphor of nation as he suggests, but it should also be seen as a metaphor of the navy. *1087* is not renamed, thus she retains her naval identity, and the last shots of the film show her sailing freely in wartime. The navy enabled the male group in the film to function appropriately, and it is the ship that continues to act as a moral compass and as a force for the ultimate good of nation. Even in the turbulence of postwar society, therefore, the navy provided a line of continuity. The

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[784] See Steven Fielding, 'The Good War: 1939-1945', in Nick Tiratsoo (ed.), *From Blitz to Blair: A New History of Britain Since 1939* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1997), pp. 25-52.
[785] Jim Cook, 'The Ship that Died of Shame', Charles Barr (ed.), *All Our Yesterdays: 90 Years of British Cinema* (London: BFI Publishing in association with the Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1986), p. 362.
[786] Tim O'Sullivan, 'Not Quite Fit for Heroes: Cautionary Tales of Men at Work – *The Ship that Died of Shame* and *The League of Gentlemen*', in Burton, O'Sullivan and Wells (eds), *Liberal Directions*, p. 173.
[787] See also O'Sullivan, 'Not Quite Fit for Heroes', p. 177.
[788] Ibid., p.179.

attractions of continuity were evident in reactions to the next case studies in this chapter.

7. *The Battle of the River Plate* (1956) and *The Cruel Sea* (1953)

As suggested above, the war film has been one of the most analysed aspects of 1950s cinema. *The Battle of the River Plate* and *The Cruel Sea* both fell within this genre, the common traits of which have been identified by Basinger, Geraghty, Ramsden and Rayner.[789] This section looks at the contemporary reaction to both films within the context of the 1950s war film.

The Battle of the River Plate references tradition to represent a wartime view of the navy in a just conflict. *The Cruel Sea* is more concerned with the psychological aspects of war, boredom and futility. It concentrates on a small group of hostilities only servicemen, whereas *The Battle of the River Plate* is concerned with the regular navy.

7.1 The Battle of the River Plate

7.1.1 Synopsis

At beginning of the war the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* under the command of Captain Langsdorff is hunting down British ships in the Atlantic. In November she attacks and sinks the merchantman *Africa Shell* and the crew are taken on board *Graf Spee*. Captain Dove of the *Africa Shell* meets with Langsdorff who is shown to be fair in his dealings with Dove and they build up a mutual respect.

[789] Jeanine Basinger's *The World War II Combat Film: Anatomy of a Genre* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986) analysis of the characteristics of the American war film correlates in many respects to the British equivalent. Both Geraghty (*British Cinema in the Fifties* p. 178) and Rayner (*The Naval War Film* pp. 6-9) use her work in looking at the generic features of the British war film. Basinger outlines the commonalities of the films and lists major features as: a focus on 'true' stories, co-operation from the armed services in the making of the film, ritual and military iconography, male groups made up of diverse types, often on a particular mission led by a hero, the display of technology, the death of group members, conflict within the group and learning through contrasting episodes of 'action and repose, safety and danger, combat and non combat, comedy and tragedy, dialogue and action'. (Basinger, *The World War II Combat Film*, pp. 74-75) These elements she contends arise from the combat films made in wartime and are key in the development of the genre. Geraghty cautions that care needs to be taken in assuming that the analysis of the war British film points to a discrete national cinema, as the peculiarities of the war film are not confined to British productions. (Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, p. 178.)

Langsdorff points out that *Graf Spee* is too fast to be caught by British cruisers: Dove contends that his ship only has the advantage on paper. When the *Graf Spee* docks with its supply ship more British prisoners are brought aboard, and are treated well in comparison with their internment onboard the *Altmark.*

As more British ships fail to reach port the Admiralty is aware that there is a killer on the loose, although Langsdorff's continually changing of his ship's identity complicates the hunting down of the *Graf Spee.* The last two merchantmen to be sunk, however, manage to radio messages giving their positions while they are under attack and the net begins to close in on the pocket battleship. In the South Atlantic Commodore Harwood in HMS *Ajax* calls a meeting with the captains from his small task force of *Ajax,* HMS *Exeter* and HMNZS *Achilles.* Given the position sent by the *Doric Star* Harwood guesses that *Graf Spee* will head for the River Plate and estimates an arrival date of 13 December.

Harwood's assumptions prove correct and although the British ships are out-ranged and out-gunned they mount a ferocious attack. *Graf Spee* is damaged badly enough to retreat to Montevideo, and *Exeter,* the most severely hit British ship, heads for the Falklands. The rest of Harwood's force waits outside Montevideo, at the mouth of the River Plate, with the intention of ambushing *Graf Spee* on her departure. They are reinforced by HMS *Cumberland*. In Montevideo the *Graf Spee* attracts large crowds around the harbour. Mike Fowler, an American journalist covers the story for American radio, broadcasting from a local cafe, and the British ships follow his reporting.

Langsdorff releases his British prisoners and gives Captain Dove two *Graf Spee* hat ribbons as a souvenir. There is a round of diplomatic visits from the Germans, French and British to the Uruguayan foreign minister with all sides gambling for time. The British are waiting for reinforcements to give them a better chance of destroying the German ship. After assessing the damage to the *Graf Spee* the Uruguayan officials tell Langsdorff that he must leave by 8.00pm on Sunday 17 December. The British do not succeed in stalling the departure.

At sunset on the 17 December *Graf Spee* sets sail followed by the German merchant ship *Tacoma.* Battle flags are raised on the British ships and reconnaissance aircraft sent out. The pilots report that the *Graf Spee* has stopped before reaching the open sea, and the crew are off-loaded to the *Tacoma.* Then there is series of huge explosions and the *Graf Spee* sinks. Langsdorff, seeing that the odds were against him, and determined to save his sailors, has scuttled the ship. Dove goes to see Langsdorff on the merchant vessel and they shake hands, wishing each other luck for the future.

7.1.2 Reception

Reaction to the film from the critics varied widely with few giving unqualified praise but box office returns were unequivocal: the film was the third most popular of 1957,[790] and made more money than any other Powell and Pressburger production.[791] In addition, *Battle of the River Plate* was chosen as the Royal Film Performance for 1956,[792] following the tradition of naval films chosen for the occasion in the earlier part of the century.

Some of the criticism of the film stemmed from its narrative structure which divided slightly awkwardly into three parts from different perspectives:[793] first Langsdorff on the *Graf Spee*, then the battle which is seen only from the British point of view and third the reporting from the American journalist.[794] In addition some found the battle scene confusing and unclear.[795] The greatest controversy in reviews, however, was over the sympathetic representation of the German captain of the *Graf Spee*, as well as the representation of the British ships.[796]

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[790] MacKenzie, *British War Films,* p. 146.
[791] Ramsden 'Refocusing the People's War', p. 56.
[792] 'Battle of the River Plate: Royal Film Performance', *Manchester Guardian,* 30 October 1956.
[793] This was reminiscent of the criticism of *For Freedom*, which also dealt with the Battle of the River Plate. Powell and Pressburger also use the device of a journalist in giving the action from different viewpoints echoing *For Freedom's* narrative structure.
[794] MacKenzie, *British War Films,* p. 146.
[795] See 'Naval Occasion', *Financial Times,* 10 October 1956, and 'The Battle of the River Plate', *New Yorker,* 11 January 1958.
[796] The film became a box office success in Germany which was 'probably due to the fact that the German naval commander, played by Peter Finch, emerged as the most sympathetic character in the film – a factor that contributed to some adverse reaction when the film was released in London'

Responding to the choice of the film for the Royal Film Performance, the *Daily Herald*'s critic wrote:

> I thought the much-criticised selection committee had chosen a story of British courage. I was wrong. The heroes of this picture are a GERMAN officer and a GERMAN ship... I came away from the film with the impression that the poor little *Graf Spee* had been hounded by three gigantic British cruisers. Fortunately my memory of the facts corrected that impression. But even 17 years after the event, I don't think this kind of a whitewash is fitting, especially at a Royal Film performance.[797]

Others praised the even-handed approach, such as the *Monthly Film Bulletin:* 'This account of the first of the war's major naval actions is straightforward, serious, and made with a scrupulous concern to be fair to both sides,'[798] and the *Spectator*: 'Better achieved is the sense almost of comradeship-in-enmity, of sympathy across distance of ideology, nationality, language and mere space – a thing seldom achieved during this last war, when the enemy was not a nation but a creed'.[799]

The portrayal of Langsdorff did arouse some sympathy for the hunting down of the *Graf Spee*. Although the film emphasised the fact that the British were at a disadvantage against the speed and firing capacity of the pocket battleship, the three against one image gave rise to some misunderstanding of the nature of the British victory. *Reynolds News* was particularly outraged and used this to attack British class attitudes:

> ... I hope it never gets shown abroad. For as a human document, it casts a revealing searchlight over some nasty flaws in our national outlook… it is all presented through a softening haze of pride and glory like some monstrous bloody game of cricket... Yet on this occasion we had so little to be proud of. The *Graf Spee* battered by British guns limped into harbour to be finished off

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reported *Variety*. 'British Graf Spee B.O. Wow in Reich', *Variety*, 17 July 1957. An even-handed view of the enemy was also a source of criticism in response to *The Valiant* (1961). It might have been expected that a British naval captain ignoring the Geneva Convention by denying medical attention to a critically injured Italian frogman would have caused offence. This was accepted in the mostly negative reviews but like *The Battle of the River Plate* the sympathy in the film went to the Italians and this was considered inappropriate: see for example 'That Sinking Feeling', *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 January 1962 and 'The Valiant', *Daily Worker*, 4 January 1962.

[797] 'It's the Germans who get the glory', *Daily Herald*, 30 October 1956.

[798] 'The Battle of the River Plate', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 23/275 (1956), p. 148.

[799] Ibid.

> by its own Captain Langsdorff... How this naval suicide can be accounted a triumph for the Royal Navy I have yet to understand. And how sick I am of stiff-upper-lippish class consciousness of British war films...[800]

The opposite and much more familiar attitude to the representation of the navy on film was expressed in the *News of the World*:

> Without the slightest doubt *The Battle of the River Plate* – the picture the Queen saw – is a magnificent and memorable film. Those old enough remember the dismal and dispiriting days of late 1939 will recall the classic sea-victory which warmed the cockles of a nation's heart and revived the glorious sense of ultimate triumph. To younger people this matchless story of how three British cruisers outfought an infinitely more powerful enemy will rank not only as rich entertainment but as an inspiration...My heart leapt as the three ships moved in to the kill with battle-ensigns flying. Those were moments of magic and of inextinguishable memory.[801]

The idea of the story as an inspiration to the young was shared by Michael Powell, who wrote a novel about the Battle of the River Plate. In the introduction he expressed the wish that future generations of children would 'read and absorb it into their experience'.[802] This was a traditional use of the naval tale, and the nature of the Battle of the River Plate was in some respects an old-fashioned action.[803] It was one of the few surface battles of the war and its outcome depended less on technology such as radar, submarines and aircraft whose presence characterised action for much of the Second World War as well as subsequent cinematic representations. This was recognised by the reviewer in the *Financial Times:*

> The fascinating narrative elements of this encounter are obvious immediately; the appeal of a brave attacking force vastly inferior in armament, the appeal of a redoubtable enemy commander humanely mindful of the chivalry of the sea, the appeal of an old fashioned tactical engagement actually preceded by the Nelsonian refinement of a Captains' council in the flagship. The heroic aspects of the defeat of the Graf Spee have a quality which seems to belong to earlier history than the last war.[804]

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[800] 'War and the Stiff Upper Lip', *Reynolds News,* 4 October 1956.
[801] 'The Battle of the River Plate' *News of the World,* 4 October 1956.
[802] Michael Powell, *Graf Spee,* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1956) quoted by Justin Hobday in 'The Battle of the River Plate', BFI Screenonline www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/440192 [accessed 20 October 2010]
[803] Rayner notes that the action was more typical of the First World War in *The Naval War Film,* p. 67.
[804] 'Naval Occasion', *Financial Times,* 4 October 1956.

The film's box office success, despite press criticism, may in part be explained by the appeal of a naval battle told in a traditional format. The superior force of the enemy was a factor emphasised in popular accounts of the most famous battles of the Armada and Trafalgar.[805] *The Battle of the River Plate* told a story of fighting captains, casting them as heroes and virtually ignored the lower deck. Rayner also suggests that 'magnanimity' to the enemy 'responds to and reinforces a naval institutional history of supremacy'[806] thus also drawing upon previous images of the navy in popular culture. As Harper and Porter note with regard to the 1950s war film in general, the: 'combination of wartime history and a boys' adventure story made them ideal films to which fathers could take their sons for both nostalgia and educational purposes'.[807] The film clearly fell into this category.

7.1.3 *The Battle of the River Plate* in the Context of 1950s Film

The Battle of the River Plate shared a number of the generic features of the 1950s war film. It was based on an actual event,[808] was made with naval co-operation and took a semi-documentary approach to its subject. None of these were a new phenomenon in the making of maritime film, but they were taken further during the 1950s.

Both Ramsden and Mackenzie have identified the extraordinary lengths that Powell and Pressburger went to in researching *The Battle of the River Plate*.[809] In addition to contacting British survivors they also went to interview relatives of Langsdoff, and Captain Bell, formerly of HMS *Exeter*, was engaged as the chief technical advisor.[810] The Admiralty co-operated at every level, with the Mediterranean fleet arranging a sea exercise around the filming as well as providing ships. Powell and Pressburger also used the ships that were present at the battle where possible.

This was symptomatic of a striving for authentic detail in war films of the 1950s. Ramsden explains how filmmakers of the period were concerned with portraying

[805] See the Prologue.
[806] Rayner, *The Naval War Film,* p. 68.
[807] Harper and Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s,* p. 255.
[808] Other maritime examples include *Cockleshell Heroes, Sink the Bismarck* and *Dunkirk.*
[809] See Ramsden, 'Refocusing the People's War', p. 52, and MacKenzie, *British War Films,* pp. 145-6.
[810] MacKenzie, *British War Films,* p. 145.

'reality,' through personal experiences gleaned from interviews, published memoirs and through service co-operation.[811] MacKenzie notes that the services did not abandon their publicity departments as they had at the end of the First World War, although the Admiralty reduced their personnel to a greater extent than the others.[812] Most of the major films of the period, however, received Admiralty support, as they had during the war. The Admiralty recognised the value of promotion through film particularly in terms of recruitment. For example, the trade leaflet for *Albert RN* (1953), a POW film, advertised that:

> One of the most valuable tie-ups effected for a film in this country has been arranged by Eros for 'Albert RN' with the Director of Naval Recruiting... Every naval recruiting office in the country has been instructed to co-operate with exhibitors showing the picture, and to place window display facilities at their disposal.[813]

The Battle of the River Plate, in line with other war films of the time, concentrated on the male group, and moreover on the officer class rather than the lower ranks. The film emphasises the co-operation of the British officers and their sense of common purpose. In contrast to Langsdorrf, who is nearly always seen alone bearing the burden of command, the British captains are always surrounded on the bridge by fellow officers and maintain a jolly banter with other ships of the squadron. Unlike other 1950s films, however, *The Battle of the River Plate* does not explore this group as individuals. They are part of a seamless group that is the Royal Navy, not a set of individuals grappling with their own insecurities. Any sense of life outside the Royal Navy is completely absent. This is one of the features that made the film such a traditional account of battle.

7.2 The Cruel Sea

7.2.1 Synopsis

The Cruel Sea tells the story of the Battle of the Atlantic through the eyes of Captain Ericson, RNR. At the outbreak of war he is detailed to HMS *Compass Rose*, a newly

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811 Ramsden, 'Refocusing the People's War', pp. 49-50.
812 MacKenzie, *British War Films,* p. 129.
813 *Albert RN,* Advertising Material published by Eros Films Limited (undated).

built corvette, for convoy duty. Ericson is the only professional sailor amongst his newly appointed officers, Lockhart, Ferraby, Bennett and Morrell (who joins slightly later). Bennett, First Lieutenant, is immediately marked out as a bully. After fitting out, sea trials and exercises at sea they are sent out to escort a convoy across the North Atlantic. The voyage proves a rude awakening for the new crew, although they all arrive safely back in Liverpool where they hear the news of the evacuation at Dunkirk. Bennett's behaviour becomes worse after he returns from shore leave drunk. Encouraged by the other officers, he leaves the ship with a feigned ulcer.

Back at sea it becomes clear that the German navy is becoming more potent. The crew witness their first U-boat attack, and pick up survivors from the destroyed merchant vessels. *Compass Rose* returns home for a refit so that new radar technology can be installed. On shore leave Chief Petty Officer Tallow takes Chief Engineer Watts to meet his sister, and they strike up a relationship that leads to their engagement.

Returning to sea on the Gibraltar run, their convoy is at one point being hunted by eleven U-boats, and *Compass Rose* mounts an attack on one spotted after it has sunk a British ship. Ericson faces a cruel moral dilemma: a choice between pursuing the U-boat and saving men from the water. The men are sacrificed and Ericson is tormented further when they fail to destroy the U-boat.

Sailing from Gibraltar, *Compass Rose* is forced to stop to make repairs, unprotected and vulnerable, but survives the night and finally makes a successful attack on a U-boat before returning home. On shore Tallow once more goes to visit his sister with Watts, but the town has been bombed and she is dead. Morrell discovers his wife's infidelity. Lockhart becomes attached to Wren Julie Hallam, but is reluctant to pursue the relationship, since he believes that in wartime it is better to have nothing to lose.

On their return to sea, *Compass Rose* is attacked and sunk by a U-boat and many of the crew, including Tallow, Watts and Morrell, are lost. The survivors, on two rafts, are rallied by Ericson and Lockhart while they wait to be picked up. After rescue both Ericson and Lockhart are promoted. Lockhart could now have his own command but chooses to stay with Ericson when he is detailed as captain of the *Saltash Castle.* Sent to the Baltic, they pursue a U-boat, but lose contact having made their first

attack. Lockhart thinks that it was successful, but Ericson believes the submarine has escaped and doggedly carries on the chase to the point of exhaustion. Finally the boat is picked up on radar again, a successful attack is made, and the German survivors brought aboard. In the final shots of the film, the *Saltash Castle* sails past the surrendered U-boat fleet.

7.2.2 Reception

The Cruel Sea was a great box office success. It rated as the third most popular film of 1953[814] and was the top-grossing film of the year.[815] In reviews it was almost invariably considered an excellent, if not the best, example of the naval war film genre.[816] The film was based on Nicholas Monsarrat's bestselling novel of the same title, one of a proliferation of war-based novels that abounded at the time and went alongside the popularity of the war film.[817] The question of realism, and the closeness of the film to the actualities of war, dominated many reviews. Reflecting contemporary preoccupation with the accurate portrayal of the war, the film's 'authenticity' was questioned in two ways – one in the respect of the war itself and the other in relation to the novel. For example, from *Time and Tide:*

> The best of Monsarrat has been retained; the timelessness, the physical hardship, the monotony broken by extravagant interludes of danger, the development of character under the stress of the service, the dreadful reporting of dreadful actuality. And contrary to all film precedent the less satisfactory interludes, which take up much of the book, have been condensed to their bare dramatic essentials. The ladies for once have been kept in their place: instead the film concentrates on the most important human relationship between Ericson and Lockhart. The result is the best film of the sea war to date.[818]

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[814] Harper and Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, p. 249.
[815] Spicer, *Typical Men*, p. 38.
[816] 'the best film of the sea war to date,' *Time and Tide*, 4 April 1953, 'this is the film of the year. Everyone must see it,' *Daily Mirror*, 25 April 1953.
[817] See Ramsden, 'Refocusing the People's War', pp. 36-37.
[818] 'The Cruel Sea', *Time and Tide*, 4 April 1953.

The film was seen by some as a semi-documentary or even pure documentary,[819] although Monsarrat's novel was a fictionalised account of his war memoirs. For example in the *New Statesman*:

> The Cruel Sea is Ealing's semi-documentary of a corvette during the war, and an unusually good one. The tradition that films about the Navy should be long, slow, decent and restrained is kept up: we start in with the humours of training, we look for the war, we find it and we are shocked, we grow tired of it, and still the war and the film go on till both are exhausted... What raises *The Cruel Sea* above the other pieces of the kind is an extra ounce of realism, and the solidity of its chief characters...[820]

In spite of its overall popularity, critical weariness with the naval film was also apparent in reviews of *The Cruel Sea*. Some saw it as derivative and 'in all its essentials the typical naval war story that we have been used to since 1940'.[821] *Time and Tide* conceded that the film was better than most of the genre but could not resist parodying the British naval film:

> British naval pictures have tended to keep closely to a pattern. You-know-whom on the bridge with just a trifle too much of a Beatty tilt and the upper lip of the definitive Rover: you-know-whom in a blue funk below. A selection of homely souls with adenoids as womenfolk for the non-commissioned; an emotionally contained lady or two in black and silver fox for the officers; a couple of combat thrills; and a sprinkling of determined humour, basically 'Cockney' but consciously extended to include a' 'representative' catch from Wales, Scotland and the English north country. Ireland is always optional in these things.[822]

This recognisable format led to more serious criticism in the left-wing press, particularly in relation to the focus on the officer class. Rattigan has interpreted the sidelining of the working classes in the 1950s film as a revisionist telling of the war in which it is the middle classes who are shown to take the lead role in the national cause, and this re-writing was certainly noted on the left at the time: thus returning to

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[819] 'As a documentary the film is magnificent, and the action free from any false heroics' commented the *News Chronicle.* 'The Cruel Sea', *News Chronicle,* 27 March 1953.
[820] 'The Cruel Sea', *New Statesman,* April 4, 1953.
[821] 'The Cruel Sea', *Punch,* 8 April 1953.
[822] 'The Cruel Sea', *Time and Tide,* 4 April 1953.

the phenomenon that Colville has observed of the navy being the preserve of middle-class values precluding the working classes.[823] The *Daily Worker* commented:

> The outstanding fact about British forces in the last war was that they knew why they were fighting. To ignore this is disservice to the hundreds of thousands of men who died fighting fascism. With this central falsity go others common to most British films of this kind. There is the incurable officer's eye view which allows only commissioned types to have any real character, the lower orders being sketched conventionally in the Noël Coward manner.[824]

7.2.3 *The Cruel Sea* and *In Which We Serve*

Many reviews of the film made comparison between *The Cruel Sea* and *In Which We Serve,* for example: 'Here at last is a picture to equal Noël Coward's *In Which We Serve*. It gets as close to the real thing as that film did...'[825] In many respects *The Cruel Sea* was the antithesis of its predecessor, but as the sense that this was the *sort* of film that had been made during the war encouraged an overall impression that the navy was being depicted in a way similar to that in *In Which We Serve.* Viewed in detail, however, *The Cruel Sea* was very different in atmosphere.

There are parallels in structure, in that both films follow a ship from construction to sinking and neither celebrates a victory. *The Cruel Sea*, however, deals predominately with hostilities only servicemen and not those who have grown up with naval traditions. In addition family relationships are seen as much as a source of tension as support (as in *Morning Departure*). The memories that flood the sailors' minds as they await rescue are not the happy reminiscences of family Christmases but instances of regret. Few reviews recognised the full difference between representations but it was noted in the *Sunday Chronicle:*

> *The Cruel Sea* is a cruel picture. By this I mean that Ealing has faced the circumstances of our Navy in wartime with an honesty that makes even the book look prettified and all other naval pictures downright namby-pamby. When torpedo survivors are brought on board they don't fall gracefully into

[823] Rattigan, 'The Last Gasp of the Middle Classes', p. 151 and see Colville, 'Corporate Domesticity and Idealised Masculinity', pp. 499-519.
[824] 'The Cruel Sea', *Daily Worker*, 28 March 1953.
[825] 'Ping! Its Better than Zither', *Daily Sketch*, 27 March , 1953.

> blankets and sip rum with happy smiles. It also shows men clinging to a raft-not with the rueful British grins of Noël Coward's crew in *In Which We Serve*, but shaking like epileptics and terrified to fall asleep, their faces black with cold.[826]

Perhaps more than any of the other naval films it explored the psychological aspects of command. These had been portrayed as unproblematic in *In Which We Serve* and by the British officers in *The Battle of the River Plate.* The complexity with which this subject is portrayed in *The Cruel Sea* is apparent in the central scene of the film, in which Ericson makes a decision between picking up survivors and sailing straight through them in pursuit of a submarine, and his subsequent difficulty in coming to terms with that decision. The tears that he sheds as a result contribute to the most moving moment of the film: a point comparable to Walter hearing of his wife's death in *In Which We Serve*. In both cases, British seamen display stoicism and stiff upper lips, but the major shift is the posing of a moral dilemma in *The Cruel Sea.* Moral dilemmas are also central to *Morning Departure*, *The Ship that Died of Shame* and the later film *The Valiant.*

The Cruel Sea portrays command fundamentally differently. The strength of character required comes not as the result of a 'natural' class order, as implied by Kinross's captaincy in *In Which We Serve*. In *The Cruel Sea* a more meritocratic selection takes place.[827] Before the inexperienced Lockhart emerges as Ericson's equal, the brutish Bennett feigns illness to avoid the convoy and Morell has a breakdown.[828] This is not a mythic Royal Navy born out of tradition, long service and Nelsonian values. Ericson's navy is one of hardship and boredom and its experience is of specific endurance rather than enduring continuity.

7.2.4 Gender and *The Cruel Sea*

> Three Men[829] (They really ARE men – and they're British) overshadow one Woman: It is just about two years ago I complained in this column about the

[826] 'A Nightmare Through Sailor's Eyes', *Sunday Chronicle*, 29 March 1953.
[827] See 'The Meritocratic Professional Officer' in Spicer, *Typical Men,* p. 33.
[828] See discussion in Spicer, *Typical Men,* pp. 37-38.
[829] Referring to Jack Hawkins, Donald Sinden and Stanley Barker.

> lack of masculinity in the average British male film star... splendid actors, sensitive personalities but hardly one of them with enough strength of character to blow the ash off a cigarette... Maybe the solid strength integrity and truth of this fine story has set the blood pounding in the veins of its stars.[830]

As this *Daily Express* review implies, Hawkins, Sinden and Barker were new types of heroes in the British film, and played, as noted in the above section different kinds of officers than those of the 1940s films. Even though some of the critics had concerns over the lack of working class characters, a Rank survey demonstrated that the 'display of guts and toughness' by actors such as Hawkins, 'appealed more strongly to lower-income groups'.[831] The film was, as some of the critics indicated, the same sort of naval scenario that the public had become used to since 1940, but the characters' attitudes, backgrounds and psychologies had all shifted. *The Cruel Sea*'s highly successful combination of the traditional and the new was not realised as completely in any other naval film of the period. The sea was still seen as a testing ground for male character, nurtured by paternalism, but the relationship was explored at deeper level than had previously been represented on screen.

8. *A Night to Remember* (Roy Ward Baker, 1958) and *Passage Home* (Roy Ward Baker, 1955)

These two films portray the Merchant Navy, although *A Night to Remember*'s depiction of officers recalls Royal Naval characters in other films. Both films tell pre-war stories. *A Night to Remember* was one of two films made about the *Titanic* in the 1950s and at its heart the film was a discussion of class. *Passage Home* is one of the few films not set in wartime to represent conditions in the Merchant Navy realistically. It comes closer to the 'new wave' than any of the other maritime films of the period. Most of the Merchant Navy based films of the period were sea adventures or comedies with a largely benign and sometimes nostalgic view of the sea. *Passage*

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[830] 'Three Men', *The Daily Express*, 27 March 1953.
[831] Spicer, *Typical Men*, p. 38.

Home is not only more serious, but also portrays an edgier side of shipping that was otherwise little represented.

8.*1 A Night to Remember*

8.1.1 Synopsis

A Night to Remember recounts the story of the sinking of the *Titanic* in April 1912. Beginning with the launch of the ship, it then shows both passengers and the shipping company making preparations for the voyage. The story is seen largely through the eye of Second Officer Lightoller who is seen travelling to join the ship. Once the ship is at sea, various characters are introduced from amongst the first class travellers, the steerage passengers, the stokers and the officers.

Several ice warnings are received from other ships but these are either dismissed or ignored due to pressure on the telegraph operators to send passengers' private messages, and the *Titanic* goes ahead at normal speed. When a lookout spots an iceberg straight ahead, the ship is turned hard to port but collides with the berg on the starboard side. The collision does not appear to have a big impact of the vessel but the damage is below the waterline. The ship designer, Andrews, inspects the ship and realises that all five water compartments will flood and the ship will sink. A distress call is immediately sent out. The SS *Californian* is less than ten miles away but the radio operator has already retired to bed and does not hear the call, whilst the captain also dismisses flares that are sent up believing them to be fireworks. The *Carpathia* responds to the SOS and makes course for the *Titanic* at full speed, although she is some hours away.

Captain Smith orders Lightoller and Murdoch to start lowering the lifeboats for women and children only, as they are already aware that there are insufficient lifeboats aboard for all passengers. There is considerable panic, and some men attempt to sneak into the boats. Some couples refuse to be separated and decide to stay on board. While the first and second class women and children fill the lifeboats, the steerage passengers are held back by the stewards, who will not allow them

through the first class areas of the ship. As the women and children wait in the boats members of the orchestra can be heard playing and one sings *Nearer My God to Thee.* The telegraph officers keep repeating the distress signal until the very last minute. When all of the boats are gone, Lightoller and many others jump into the water and hold on to a collapsible boat until the *Carpathia* arrives to pick up survivors.

8.1.2 Reception

A Night to Remember was based upon Walter Lord's book of the same title.[832] It sought to portray a realistic and accurate account of the *Titanic* disaster and this was emphasised in publicity material for the film.[833] Reviews were mixed although most thought it essentially good. The film appears to have been profitable but was not a run-away box office success.[834]

Most of the reviews concerned themselves with the film's realism. It was watched almost as a documentary in the same way as *The Battle of the River Plate.* Lord's research was followed very closely, and the film is still considered the most accurate screen representation of the events on the night the *Titanic* was sunk.[835] The use of black and white film was a deliberate choice by the cinematographer, Geoff Unsworth, to give the film a documentary look.[836] This also meant that actual documentary footage could be inserted without being too intrusive. This realism was seen both as the film's major triumph and as a weakness, with some critics complaining that it was too clinical and lacked sufficient characterisation. For example, from the *Observer:*

> Its purpose is to assemble the ascertainable facts about the life and death of the Titanic, and present them with fidelity and without prejudice as dramatically and as economically as possible... As a clean cut, unbiased, dramatic

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832 Walter Lord, *A Night to Remember* (London: Longman, Green, 1956).
833 Sarah Street, 'Questions of Authenticity and Realism in *A Night to Remember* (1958)', in Bergfelder and Street, *The Titanic in Myth and Memory*, p. 143.
834 Richards, *The Definitive Titanic Film*, p. 98.
835 Ibid., p. 58.
836 Street, 'Questions of Authenticity and Realism in *A Night to Remember'*, p. 143.

> presentation of a momentous fact in history, the British film seldom did a better job than this.[837]

and from the *Sunday Dispatch:*

> I rate it as worthy, well-meant and ultimately dull... The script writer, Eric Ambler has gone all out for documentary detail and this is impressive enough, if you care to know how many pots of marmalade and how many crates of caviar the ill-fated vessel carried... a perfectly proportioned model of the drowned state room is no substitute for one flash of real characterisation which would turn the doomed puppets of the screenplay into living and suffering people... [838]

Reviewers also wondered why the story of the *Titanic* continued to hold such fascination. Some were surprised by its reappearance, since there had been a number of cinematic representations of the sinking of *Titanic* before the 1958 production,[839] including the lavish Oscar winning American made *Titanic* (1953), made only five years before:

> Not the Titanic again! The English, who have been busy recreating their national disasters in film form, have presumably tired of American efforts to reconstruct the sinking of the unsinkable ship... Using Walter Lord's account, and seemingly forgetful of the fact that approximately half our population has already seen a pictorialization of Mr Lord's researches on television, they have pitched into the tragic circumstances with energy and a passion for detail.[840]

The most frequent critical response, however, was an attempt to explain the cultural significance of the sinking. The explanations put forward were that the sinking of the Titanic was symbolic first of the passing of an age, second as a warning of human fallibility, third of human courage and fourth as a comment on class.[841] These will be discussed in turn.

Richards has suggested that the renewed interest in the *Titanic* paralleled the sense of the lost age after the First World War: '...from the perspective of 1955, in the aftermath of two world wars, the Holocaust and the atomic bomb, the Edwardian era

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837 'The Cruel Sea', *Observer,* 6 July 1958.

838 Oh, these prestige pictures!' *Sunday Dispatch,* 6 July 1958,

839 *Saved from the Titanic,* a reconstruction (1912 FR); *Night and Ice* (1912, DE); *Atlantic* (1929); *Titanic,* German anti-British propaganda film (1943, DE); *Titanic,* (1953, US).

840 'A Night to Remember', *Saturday Review,* 13 December 1958.

841 See 'Tragedy at Sea: Film Record of the Titanic', *Times,* 2 July 1958, 'The Cruel Sea', *Observer,* 6 July 1958.

had assumed the golden age of an idyll...'[842] Some reviewers did refer to an era ending, although they did not relate it to contemporary society, except reflexively with reference to the cinema of the day

> But something worthwhile also went down with these so-called Good Old Days... We laugh now at the British tradition of the stiff upper lip. But I for one find such behaviour a welcome change from the neurotic way film characters would behave in similar circumstances now. [843]

Reviewers were more concerned with an area where some saw little progress: the hierarchy of the British class system. This interpretation was, perhaps unsurprisingly, most strongly expressed in the *Tribune:*

> And perhaps it is even more significant that the end of the film *Titanic* is treated as the end of an era. The early scenes of the film contrast the first class passengers' departure – aristocrats drive past waving workhouse children 'earning their Christmas turkey' as a footman puts it – and the steerage emigrants. Underneath this daring social comment, a mere half century late, is the implication that the days when wealth bought privilege at the expense of others ended that night the Titanic went down. But that's a night we can't remember – it hasn't yet come![844]

The reviewer identified one of the conflicts in the film between a supposed ending to class hierarchy and a recognition that that hierarchy still operated. In fact these criticisms of the film reflected debate that had persisted since 1912 as discussed by Delap. Although as she writes1912 had been portrayed as a 'highpoint of a revival in chivalry' it was race, gender and classbound as has been previously discussed. She notes contemporary reactions to the reporting of the disaster:

> Chivalry was open to challenge not only from feminists but also from working-class commentators, who were incensed by the class discrimination in the statistics of who was saved, and by the sentimental comments about the transcendence of class. Class was not transcended, they argued, but tragically represented in the survival of the first-class passengers at the expense of the steerage.[845]

Street *relates A Night to Remember* to the wider picture of 1950s cinema: 'as an example of British filmmaking of the late 1950s, it relates both to conventions of

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[842] Richards, *The Definitive Titanic Film*, p. 10.
[843] 'Stiff Upper Lip Went Down With the Titanic', *Reynolds News*, 6 July 1958.
[844] 'The Titanic won't keep British films of the rocks', *Tribune*, 11 July 1958.
[845] Delap, 'Thus Does Man Prove His Fitness to be the Master of Things', p. 67.

'quality realism' which had dominated British cinema, but in its class thematic to the 'new wave'.'[846] It was however an old debate, and one which, as has been seen, had been continually highlighted in maritime film.

8.1.3. *A Night to Remember* and the Naval Film

The film is careful to portray each class as having heroes and villains, but the one group represented uncritically is the officers of the ship. The *Tribune* noted that:

> One refreshing aspect of the film is its departure from tradition that every Briton is equipped with a cool head and a stiff upper lip... All the same, the film concentrates heavily on Kenneth More, who plays Second Officer Lightoller and makes him as cool, calm and collected a hero as ever smiled his way through a British war film. Characters are, in fact, divided pretty sharply into black-and-white categories, and although there is an attempt at showing that there some brave men among the steerage passengers and a few cowards (including the chairman of the shipping company), travelling first class, the officers come out of it as the usual bunch of supermen... [847]

That More's character is referenced to British *war* film is particularly telling. Lightoller is almost indistinguishable from Royal Navy officers in such films: in the leave taking of his wife, his commitment to his job and the ship, and in the calmness with which he handles the panicking passengers. More was already associated with naval officer roles in *Morning Departure* and *Scott of the Antarctic,* and as an RAF officer in *Reach for the Sky* (1956). Despite the film's great attention to authentic detail, Lightoller was played without the West Country accent that he in fact had**: the** use of regional accents was in general one of the ways in which merchant marine were distinguished from their naval counterparts on film as was seen in *The Battle of the River Plate*. Instead, More's clipped tones create a further naval resemblance. As has been seen previously merchant navy portrayals were often overlaid by naval tradition and rhetoric.

There were other commonalities with naval films. First, the documentary approach: although this was part of a wider maritime tradition, as seen in the shipbuilding examples, and as reactions to *The Cruel Sea* indicated, realism was associated with

[846] Street, 'Questions of Authenticity and Realism in *A Night to Remember* ', p. 151.
[847] 'The Titanic won't keep British films of the rocks', *Tribune,* 11 July 1958.

the war film. Second, the deliberate use of black and white (as noted by Ramsden) was a common trait of the British war film, giving not only the feel of a documentary but the look of a film produced during the war.[848]

The popularity of the *Titanic* story may be related to the cautionary tale it offers about the over-reliance on modern technology. *A Night to Remember* emphasises this through dialogue references to the cliché of the 'unsinkable ship' and in the reluctance of passengers to abandon a ship that they mistakenly believe must remain afloat. At the same time, however, it also celebrates the technology on board.[849] The display of technology is another prominent aspect of the war film, noticeable, for example, in the portrayal of ASDIC training in *The Cruel Sea* and midget submarines in *Above Us the Waves. A Night to Remember* was, however, little discussed in terms of the maritime film at all. Its interest in shipboard detail notwithstanding, discourse around the film was dominated by its representation of class and society.

8.2 *Passage Home*

8.2.1 Synopsis

The film begins at the retirement party for 'Lucky' Ryland, a merchant captain. As a gift he is given a painting of his first command, the *Bulinga,* and the story of a voyage on the ship is told in flashback. In 1931, in the depths of economic depression, Ryland accepts a cargo of pedigree bulls to take from South America back to Britain: a deal that will make the voyage a profitable one, but that also needs a speedy delivery. He is determined to make the passage in record time. This leads him to recall his crew from shore leave and push them hard. Simultaneously, he is forced to take home a stranded British woman, Ruth, as a passenger for the British Consul. Ryland is already an unpopular and distant captain. The second in command, Llewellyn, believes that he should be in command and is eager for Ryland to make mistakes. The next most senior officer, Vosper, refuses to get involved with any shipboard issues. The crew are discontent with their officers and the conditions on board, particularly the poor quality food that the captain has procured. The atmosphere is tense and near mutinous.

[848] Ramsden, 'Refocusing the People's War', p. 38.
[849] Street, 'Questions of Authenticity and Realism in *A Night to Remember*', p. 149.

Emotions escalate still further after the boatswain, Ike, dies in part due to stress brought on by the difficulties of life on board and by his troublesome family ashore.

Ryland is drawn to Ruth and proposes to her. This would offer her the home and security that she needs, but she delays replying. Bohannon, Ryland's steward, loses no time in spreading the gossip around the ship. In the meantime Ruth is attracted to Vosper. Ryland turns to drink while waiting for her response and when Ruth comes to his cabin he attempts to rape her. Vosper stops him, punching him in the face. Ryland keeps drinking and withdraws even further from the running of the ship until a violent storm ensues threatening the ship and the bulls break free. Llewellyn loses his nerve in trying to keep control of the vessel but Ryland rallies himself in time to save the day and prove his worth. The film returns to the retirement party where it is revealed that Ruth married Vosper. As Ryland leaves the party alone Ruth follows and watches him. He turns and they both look at each other before he gets into a car and drives off.

8.2.2 Reception

Passage Home received mediocre reviews. It was criticised for poor characterisation and an over-familiar subject: 'A British picture has another go at the ever-cruel, ever-popular sea'.[850] There was also a sense that it was over plotted as noted in *Time and Tide:*

> *Passage Home*, a moderately entertaining British sea picture, is handicapped by a script which too cursorily attempts to incorporate all the standard elements of cinematic seafaring: the iron skipper, the unexpected girl passenger to set the all male-complement in an uproar, engine trouble, mutiny, the greatest storm ever, cargo of terrified cattle threatening to moo their way loose, skipper finally redeeming himself by proving to be the only real seaman on hand.[851]

The *Daily Telegraph, Manchester Guardian* and the *Monthly Film Bulletin* thought the characterisations in the film were sketchy and poorly rounded.[852] The *Monthly*

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[850] 'Passage Home', *Daily Mail*, 21 April 1955.
[851] 'Passage Home' *Time and Tide*, 23 April 1955.
[852] 'Stormy Seas', *Daily Telegraph*, 23 April 1955; 'Adventure Story with Pretensions: Trials of an Old Sea-Dog', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 April 1955.

Film Bulletin, however, recognised that the film tried to move away from the usual clichés:

> This is a film made with considerable if impersonal accomplishment, and an efficient surface realism; the story has promising elements, and there is evidence of determination in the writing generally to get beyond the stereotype in the characterisations of the crew of the *Bulinga*.[853]

The only review that gave a deeper reading of the film was in the *Daily Worker*, which appreciated the recognition of the effects of the Depression on merchant sailors. As far as its reviewer was concerned, the film depicted some of the realities of the economic slump for the ordinary worker and was therefore 'a step in the right direction';

> Where this British film rises above the routine is in setting these thrills against a background of economic reality. The time is 1931, the year of rock bottom depression when thousands of skilled seamen were 'on the beach' unable to find work. To compete for scarce cargoes... British merchant ships were sent to sea, short of equipment, without proper repairs and manned by scratch crews. The behaviour of each person aboard the Bulinga is sharply affected by the situation'.[854]

This critic saw the sailors' behaviour not as innately selfish reactions to a martinet captain, but as the outcome of an economic situation that forced them to desperate measures. The Captain's harsh actions were regarded as symptom of the pressure upon him to return a profit for the ship-owners. Likewise the ambition of the second officer and the engineer's alleged pilfering of coal were seen as the only recourse for sailors to make a living in the uncertain economic climate. Although obviously ideologically-bound, this was not a totally outlandish reading, since the portrayal of the crew makes it apparent that many of them have little choice about their situation. Largely, however, they are presented unsympathetically, for example in the brawl at the beginning of the film, and the lower deck banter, contrary to what might be expected from other maritime films, is uncharacteristically ill-natured.

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853 'Passage Home', *Monthly Film Bulletin*, 22/257 (1955), p. 84.
854 'Trouble in the Tramp', *Daily Worker*, 16 April 1955

8.2.3 *Passage Home* in the Context of the Maritime Film

Later film historians have interpreted the major theme of the film as one of sexual repression.[855] *Passage Home* has not, however, been placed in the context of the maritime film as a genre. As has been seen in *Morning Departure* and *The Cruel Sea*, sexual relationships with women were portrayed within this genre as a source of a conflict, typically between service at sea and a personal life. In *Passage Home*, Ruth's presence on board forces this issue to an extreme. The inability of the crew to adapt with any equability gives an idea that the exclusive male group at sea is an unhealthy and repressive environment.[856] This is an antithesis to all other maritime representations where the sea both 'makes' a man and encourages ideal characteristics. The male group and its ability to nurture weaker members, as seen in *Morning Departure*, for example, which is so much part of the majority of maritime films, is in this case totally dysfunctional. This is particularly true of the officers, who fail to show appropriate leadership or loyalty to each other or to the crew. The Captain is distant, unable to relate to others and neglects his duty when he is turned down by Ruth and resorts to alcohol. Unlike Lockhart's care of Ericson, when he also turns to drink under stress, no-one comes to the aid of Ryland. The reason for Ericson's lapse is also legitimised in the light of his moral dilemma. Ryland elicits no such sympathy. His first officer Llewellyn feels that he should be the one in command and is delighted at Ruth's effect on the Captain. Vosper refuses to be drawn into any disputes, supporting neither the crew nor the Captain and pursues Ruth himself.

Ryland is redeemed by his exceptional seamanship, which is also a characteristic of Captain Bligh in depictions of the mutiny on the *Bounty*. The events aboard the *Bulinga* narrowly avoid actual mutiny but, even so, this questioning of the authority of a British sea captain in a twentieth century setting was very rare on film.[857] Mutiny fitted the 1950s theme of questioning bureaucracy but was generally confined to the

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[855] See Peter Hutchings, 'Authorship and British Cinema: The Case of Roy Ward Baker', in Ashby and Higson (eds), *British Cinema*, p. 181.
[856] See Mayer, *Roy Ward Baker*, p. 123.
[857] The only other example it has been possible to find is *The Mutiny on the Elsinore* (1937) based on the Jack London novel about a merchant vessel mutiny in 1912.

distant historical navy or the American navy.[858] These historic portrayals involved Royal Navy officers, but as this study has shown, naval films tend to be very conservative in nature and it is hard to imagine a film being made with a similar plot that would have involved a contemporary naval captain. Ryland at his retirement party is, however, described in naval terms by the shipping company owner, who refers to his 'determination to put duty before anything else'. He appears to have accepted a lonely life and it assumed that he has not behaved inappropriately again, although he is evidently still not popular.

The treatment of Ryland could be seen as a wider questioning of authority and bureaucracy in films of the 1950s.[859] It also puts again class at the centre of the narrative, as the captain is distanced from the crew not only by his nature but by his class. His alienation is underlined at the end of the film as he leaves with Ruth looking on.

10. Conclusions

The period saw the production of an undiminished number of maritime films compared to previous eras, although for the first time, from the early 1950s, critics began to express weariness with the subject. The number of films being made did not, however, diminish until the 1960s and many of them continued to attract box office success. The majority were set either contemporaneously or in the very recent past. Critics at the time saw these films of the sea as part of a group which was cohesive in subject and often also in treatment. Subsequent analyses, however, have almost always ignored the connection that was so obvious to contemporary audiences.

A core group of films continued to represent the navy in a traditional way and used narratives identifiable before the war. They in turn inspired similarly continuous patriotic responses from critics and attracted Royal patronage. The films that deviated the furthest from what had become expected facets of the maritime film generally

[858] For example *Tyrant of the Seas,* Napoleonic (1950, US), *HMS Defiant* set in 1797 Spithead mutinies (1962), *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1962, US), and a fictional World War Two American naval mutiny *The Caine Mutiny* (1954, US)
[859] See Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties,* p. 56.

received the most negative criticism and also the lowest box office returns. For example, the deviation from documentary realism in *The Ship that Died of Shame*, and the deviation from crew camaraderie in *Passage Home* resonated poorly with critics and audiences. To a degree, therefore, there seems to have remained a strong critical and public taste for films, which continued to be made, enabling pride in the navy and reinforcing the idea of a positive national relationship with the sea.

But while the maritime film remained essentially conservative, especially with regards to the Royal Navy, it nevertheless incorporated many of the cinematic preoccupations of the 1950s, including the recourse to realism, a documentary approach, the Second World War and the discussion of class and gender tensions. If none of these were entirely new, their combination and extent was novel. In a period when bureaucracy and authority were being challenged on film, however, the Royal Navy was not subject to negative readings. On the contrary, it was still seen as a location in which British character was made and displayed, as was seen in *Morning Departure* and *The Cruel Sea.*

The conservatism of the maritime film, or perhaps the status of the Royal Navy, did mean that it did not fully embrace the wider social inclusivity of the 1950s film. As Hill suggests that in the context of the 1950s British film that:

> their "break towards realism" was characterised by an "injection of new content": new characters (the working-class, juvenile delinquents), new settings (the factory, the housing estate) and new problems (race and homosexuality). Although this was accompanied by a certain degree of stylistic novelty (location shooting for example), it did not in any major sense, entail the "invention of new dramatic forms".[860]

Hill notes that 'one of the most striking aspects of the British cinema towards the end of the 1950s was its increasing concern to deal with contemporary social issues'[861] although singular examples were to be found earlier. This thesis, has however, shown than in terms of the maritime film, especially the comedies and those dealing with the

[860] Hill, *Sex, Class and Realism*, p. 59.
[861] Ibid., p. 67.

maritime industries had already engaged with such themes to a considerable extent. This was representative of trends in wider society although it was also a legacy of the principles the documentary movement with its roots in the 1930s. There was a critical demand for documentary realism in relation to the maritime film which was seen from the interwar period onwards and implicit in this was wider social inclusivity. Hill further suggests that the most prolific topics included juvenile delinquency, prostitution, homosexuality and race.[862] These themes played almost no part in the maritime film. It is possible only to point to isolated examples such as *The Shipbuilders,* which considers juvenile delinquency and *Pool of London* (1950) which focussed on race: both of which appeared before the late fifties.

The most important shift in the maritime film came neither in the portrayal of the Royal or merchant navies, nor in their use to discuss social issues, but rather in the time period in which the majority of non-comedy films were set. As has been seen in previous chapters, prior to this point these films had often focussed on the contemporary maritime sphere. Indeed, one of their repeated pre-occupations had been to emphasise the relevance of that sphere to their audiences. During the 1950s, however, there was a much stronger tendency for films to be set in the previous twenty years than in the present. New stories based on the most recent experiences of the maritime sphere did not emerge. This period therefore saw the start of a shift in which the maritime past not only became the centre of attention, but was also disconnected from the maritime present, let alone the future of the country's relationship with the sea.

[862] Ibid,. p. 67.

Epilogue

1. Introduction

The epilogue looks at the period between 1960 and 2000, beginning with an overview of the film industry and maritime film in this period. The chapter identifies a sharp decline in maritime films after 1960. Part of this deficit was filled by television productions and these are discussed through short case studies of two major 1970s television series. First it considers the representation of the contemporary navy through *Warship* and a section on the Falklands conflict. Second it considers historical representations through the *Onedin Line*. It is argued that after *Warship* most maritime films were historical, focused on the Royal Navy and distanced from the contemporary maritime sphere. The chapter ends by offering some potential reasons for the decline of the maritime film related to the film industry, social factors and the break-up of Empire.

2. Overview of Cinema 1960-2000

The number of maritime films dramatically declined after 1960, in part due to a reduction in the number of British films produced in general. From the 1950s up until 1985 the British film industry was to a certain extent protected by the Eady Levy. This allowed for a percentage of box-office takings to be set aside for production administered by the National Film Finance Corporation.[863] Attempting to produce blockbusters that competed with the American market[864] was a high risk strategy and many British producers opted to produce lower budget features that were made to appeal to the home audience. Over the course of the late 1950s and the 1960s cinema audiences continued to decline with competition from television and other leisure activities. Young people had always formed a significant proportion of the audience but they became the largest group in the 1960s as the cinema became less of a family

[863] See Harper and Porter, *British Cinema of the 1950s*, especially pp. 3-34.
[864] Ibid., Harper and Porter look particularly at Rank's experience in trying to penetrate this market, pp. 35-56.

activity.[865] Audience figures hit an all time low in 1984 and rose thereafter under the influence of multiplex cinemas. The industry's income increased with the rise of home entertainment, first with video in the 1980s and later with DVD.

At the end of the century, government support was reintroduced through tax incentives and the National Lottery, and the Film Council. In spite of these interventions and the boost provided by home media, the vast majority of 'British' films were made with international funding. For example, the 1992 film about Christopher Columbus, *1492: Conquest of Paradise* had financial backing from Great Britain, France, Spain and the USA.

2.1 Maritime Films 1960 -2000

Of the maritime films identified in Appendix 1, those made after 1960 account for less than 15% of the total. The greatest decline was in the representation of the contemporary navy on screen, with the partial exception of another cycle of spy scenarios involving naval intelligence. In these, plots were inspired by the Cold War: for example *Ring of Spies* (1964),[866] *Spy Story* (1976)[867] and most notably within the James Bond franchise.[868] Bond has been looked at in terms of national identity by David Cannadine and Paul Stock has analysed the Bond films in terms of Britishness and Empire.[869] Stock asserts that the Bond movies frame Britishness in terms of foreign locations, and that, particularly within the context of Empire and through the figure of 'M' (until 1985), they indicated nostalgia for naval supremacy and colonialism.[870] James Bond himself is of course also a naval officer and this was an important part of his creation in the 1950s. As discussed in the thesis, the character of the naval officer was repeatedly used to embody British characteristics. Bond's naval

[865] See discussion in Geraghty, *British Cinema in the Fifties*, pp. 1-20.
[866] The film was based on the actual events of the Portland Spy Ring Trial in March 1961 involving the passing of information to the Soviets from the Admiralty Underwater Weapons Establishment in Portland.
[867] Film about the defection of a Russian Admiral.
[868] For example, Bond films with naval related plots: *You Only Live Twice* (Lewis Gilbert, 1967), *The Spy Who Loved Me*, (Lewis Gilbert, 1977,) American submarines, *For Your Eyes Only* (John Glen, 1981), *A View to a Kill*, (John Glen, 1985), Soviet submarines.
[869] David Cannadine, *In Churchill's Shadow: Confronting the Past in Modern Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), pp. 279-311. Paul Stock, 'Dial 'M' for Metonym: Universal Exports, M's Office Space and Empire', *National Identities*, 2/1 (2000), pp. 35-47.
[870] Ibid., p. 35 and p.45.

identity automatically informed the readers of Fleming's novels that he was patriotic, resourceful and committed. Thereafter in most of the films his status as a naval officer is largely irrelevant in comparison to his status as an MI6 agent, and the regular navy is seldom represented. Moreover, although some of Fleming's plots may have had traces of genuine scenarios, the films themselves are essentially fantasy adventures.

Two thirds of films that focussed on the Royal Navy after 1960 were historically based: a much higher proportion than previously. These split evenly between representations of WW2 and those set before. This effectively distanced the navy from audiences in considering its contemporary role as did the fantasy elements of the Bond films. The naval comedy with a contemporary setting did not survive beyond the early 1960s although there was a mid-sixties attempt at a television sit-com. In 1964 ITV produced *HMS Paradise,* perhaps attempting to build on the success of the long running radio comedy *The Navy Lark* (1959-1977).[871] *HMS Paradise* was set on a fictional island off the Dorset coast in a naval establishment where little happened and the plots centred on petty pilfering and dodging work. It ran for a year in London but was dropped half way through in other regions.

Films that dealt with the wider maritime industries were always a small group but these effectively disappeared altogether. The decline of the maritime industries received some attention on television[872] but not on the big screen. The emphasis for non-naval film shifted to historic adventure tales of shipwreck, or pirate movies mostly set in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, covering adventure film, comedies and horror film.[873] This was representative of a trend of maritime films that moved away from realistic portrayals of either the navy or maritime industry. Fantasy maritime movies had played a very small part in the number of British films produced before 1960 but there was a spate of them between the mid sixties and mid seventies, for example: *The City Under the Sea* (1965), *The Lost Continent* (1968), *Captain Nemo and the Under Water City* (1969), *The Golden Voyage of Sinbad* (1973) and

[871] Lawrie Wyman was a writer on both the *Navy Lark* and *HMS Paradise.*
[872] See Chapter 3.
[873] For example: *Captain Clegg* (1962) smuggling eighteenth century, *The Devil Ship Pirates* (1964) horror, pirates sixteenth century; *A High Wind in Jamaica* (1965), nineteenth century pirates; *Lock Up Your Daughters* (1969), comedy eighteenth century sailors.

The Land that Time Forgot (1975). As was the case for the Royal Navy, these kinds of representations distanced the contemporary state of the British maritime sphere from the audience. To a certain extent it was television that filled in this gap.

3. Television: The Contemporary Navy

Representations of the contemporary Royal Navy after the 1950s were seen on television but played almost no part on the big screen. As they had in the early years of the cinema, documentaries accounted for much of the televisual output. Titles such as *Our British Heritage: The Royal Navy* (1955), which looked at the navy's place in the defence of the country in the 1950s were reasonably common, although most concentrated on navy personnel in what would latterly develop into the docudrama.[874] The docudrama format has been used repeatedly since the successful series *Sailor* in 1976. There has only been one major fictional series, *Warship*, which was broadcast at the beginning of the 1970s.

3.1 *Warship*

Warship ran for forty-five episodes between 1973 and 1977, featuring such scenarios as IRA gunrunning, Soviet espionage and a diplomatic incident between Arabs and Israelis. The idea for *Warship* was brought to the BBC by serving Royal Naval officer Ian Mackintosh, who subsequently became the naval adviser for the series, script editor and one of the scriptwriters. Mackintosh and the producer Tony Coburn both recognised the lack of representations of the modern navy and the public's lack of awareness of its role. 'The public image of the Navy is a quarter of a century out of date' Mackintosh told the *Daily Express*, and Coburn concurred:

> People still think of the Navy as Jack Hawkins or John Mills stalking an open bridge. Nothing has happened since the Amethyst sailed down the Yangtse. We thought it was time to bring the public face to face with modern reality.[875]

[874] For example: *Captain RN*, (1969) looking at why men go to sea; *Sailor* (1976) series about life on board HMS *Ark Royal; Submarine* (1985), with HMS *Warspite;* HMS *Raleigh: Civvy to Sailor* (2003), following new recruits and *Submarine* (2000) following HMS *Superb*.
[875] 'All at Sea, but our Hero is a winner', *Daily Express*, 7 June 1973.

In agreements negotiated with the navy for the series it was established that, 'the Navy does not expect to see, or be consulted on, scripts or story content other than to give technical advice or advise on security implications' and that they did not expect the series to be a 'commercial' for the navy.[876] However, a memo to the Commander-in-Chief from naval public relations showed that there were just such expectations during the preparations for production in 1973:

> It is already clear, however – thanks in the main to the influence of those ships visited by the writers that the Navy will be portrayed as an exciting, colourful and worthwhile career, and that the impact on the viewing public, perhaps 17 million per night, will be greater than anything attempted in the PR field in recent years.[877]

At the beginning of the 1970s naval recruiting was approximately twenty-five per cent below its expected needs so this kind of publicity was potentially extremely valuable for the service.[878] Indeed the navy had already decided to use stills from the series in recruitment campaigns before the first programme had been broadcast.[879] The press also immediately recognised the object of the exercise, as noted in the *Daily Express*:

> Can 'Warship' do for the Navy what 'Softly, Softly' has done for the police – stimulate recruiting and bring about a new interest in the forces? I stand amazed at the way the Admiralty has allowed BBC television the facilities it demanded for this 12-part series – one of the most remarkable adventure series TV has ever attempted.[880]

The facilities offered by the navy in 1975 for the second series of *Warship* were staggering and represented virtually every piece of equipment that the navy had. There were some within the navy who were against such collaboration, although there is only one reference to this in the BBC files held on the series.[881] From the outset it was clear that Mackintosh wanted to portray a 'traditional' view of the navy,

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[876] Ian Mackintosh, Letter to Anthony Coburn, Drama Series Dept. BBC, 6 September 1972, BBC Written Archives Centre (Hereafter referred to as WAC), T65/232/1.
[877] Memo to Commander-in-Chief from DPR (N), 1973, WAC T65/232/3
[878] S. P. MacKenzie, 'Broadcasting the New Navy: The BBC-TV Series *Warship* (1973-1977)', *War and Society*, 25/2 (2006), p. 106.
[879] Ibid, p. 108. As Mackenzie has investigated the MOD did not keep any records regarding *Warship* and to establish whether in fact the programme did stimulate recruitment. P.120.
[880] 'Girls on Board for a New Kind of Navy Lark', *Daily Express*, 20 January 1973.
[881] Anthony Coburn and Ian MacKintosh, *Warship Possible Third Series* to Head of Drama Series, 30 September 1974, T65/232/2.

> The core of the dramatic interest in the series will be the traditional one present in the best naval novels and films, namely the god-like figure of a Captain joins a ship and crew who have never served together as a single unit before.[882]

In a reply to a letter from a member of the public questioning the suitability of the series for children in terms of such things as the morality of 'glorifying' combat and the language used by sailors, the producer made it clear that he considered the series in the national interest. In a sentiment that was similar to the didactic children's writers of the late nineteenth century and filmmakers of the early twentieth century he also felt that it was edifying programming.

> ...I believe it gave me the opportunity to, first of all, tell exciting and compulsive stories which would appeal to young and old alike, and secondly it enabled me to put before young people a way of life that seems to be wholly admirable in its basic moral structure...it has been our intention to hold up to young people a way of life in which comparatively young men carry great responsibilities serving the national interest in a clean and disciplined world.[883]

It was again pointed out that the purpose was 'not to beat the drum of recruitment for the navy,' but 'a happy blending of good-storytelling using central characters whom young men could emulate with no harm to themselves'.[884] The stories that potentially showed the navy in a bad light were edited out- despite the fact that the premise was that the BBC would maintain all editorial control; scripts were passed through the navy first.[885] Some scripts were effectively vetoed by the navy: one that had some parallels with the story of Lionel Crabb,[886] a scenario involving the ship's parson getting drunk and another where a new midshipman is a homosexual.[887] The Admiralty support must have made it difficult to insist on editorial control.

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[882] Ian MacKintosh, *Proposition paper*, WAC T65/232/1.
[883] Tony Coburn, letter to Mr/Mrs Knight, 7th August 1993, WAC T65/232/1.
[884] Ibid.
[885] Ian Mackintosh, Letter to Captain K.A. Crawley, R.N 14 January 1974, WAC T65/232/3
[886] Ian Mackintosh, Letter to Captain K.A. Crawley, R.N 14 January 1974, WAC T65/232/3 Refers to the disappearance of naval diver Commander Lionel (Buster) Crabb in 1956 after a secret mission examining the hull of a Russian warship in Portsmouth. The Cabinet Office had in fact already attempted to prevent a BBC programme about Crabb in 1969, (Attempts to stop a Proposed BBC Programme about Commander Lionel 'Buster' Crabb, 12 January 1969 CAB 163/207)
[887] Captain K. A. Crawley, letter to Ian Mackintosh, 19 Sept 1973 WAC T65/232/2.

Warship was successful and popular according to BBC monitoring forms and reviews,[888] although the quality press in particular were slow to warm to the series. By the end of the last series it attracted the majority audience share of any programme on at the same time.[889] Finding storylines, however, was an ongoing problem. In evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of running a third series of *Warship* it was mentioned that the writers contributed almost no ideas. This was perhaps reflective of the lack of knowledge amongst the general public regarding the role of the modern navy. To maintain credibility, it was necessary for HMS *Hero* to sail in foreign waters and this was particularly expensive. These problems made another series less likely, but it was the success of *Sailor*, the documentary series aboard *Ark Royal*, that helped to see the end of *Warship.* Mackintosh was absolutely against the production of *Sailor*, fearing both its impact on *Warship* and its negative effect on naval PR. He set out his objections in a letter to the Naval Director of Public Relations even though *Sailor* was already a *fait accompli.* Part of his concern was defensive in that another large scale navy series could lead to the axing of *Warship.* But his major concern was the *reality* that the documentary would show;

> …we have put always the image of the Navy first and sat firmly on those writers and directors who want to show the seamier side of Naval life. We would not show sailors getting drunk ashore in low bars, nor their returning onboard the worse for wear, nor a defaulter's session that was not integral to the plot and of more moment than simple cases of drunkenness and misbehaviour ashore'.[890]

Here Mackintosh described exactly the opening episode of *Sailor*, and he realised that it would expose *Warship* as a sanitized fictional series – despite the fact that it was billed as 'drama-documentary'.[891] Specifically he feared that *Warship* would be seen as 'cosy,' and that *Ark Royal* would be seen as the 'real Navy' and *Warship* as 'milk and water'.[892] *Warship* was a conservative series, which portrayed the navy using the values and characters prevalent in naval films of the 1940s and 1950s. It was described in the *Guardian* as a 'Boy's Own paper for old boys' which considered 'Its

[888] Monitoring Reports for Warship BBC WAC T65/232/1, 'Warship BBC 1', *Times*, 5 January 1977.
[889] Monitoring Reports for Warship BBC WAC T65/232/1, 'Warship BBC 1', *Times*, 5 January 1977 and Mackenzie, 'Broadcasting the New Navy', p. 109 , p. 113..
[890] Ian Mackintosh, Letter to Captain K. A. Leppard, Director of Public Relations (Navy), 28 May 1976, WAC T65/232/3.
[891] Ibid.
[892] Ibid.

chief virtue is its see-worthiness'.[893] The *Express* said 'The new "navy lark" is somewhere between *The Cruel Sea* and a James Bond epic, and for me it's still the Senior Service'.[894]In spite of the modern setting it held true to the traditional representation of the navy as Mackintosh had intended. This approach to the representation of the contemporary Royal Navy fell away in the final decades of the twentieth century. There was, however, one significant moment in the 1980s when all the tropes of the tradition of the navy were once again evoked.

3.2 The Falklands

The navy had a much lower cultural profile at home in the late twentieth century than it had previously seen. The exception to this was the Falklands Crisis fought against Argentina in 1982 which was the last war fought by Britain without allied support. Although by no means universal the conflict nevertheless caused a wave of patriotism across Britain, and was a contributory factor in the re-election of Margaret Thatcher's government which had become decidedly unpopular before the Argentine invasion. The fact of Britain acting alone was an important factor in unleashing a traditional patriotism: Britain protecting a tiny, almost defenceless island against a 'powerful aggressor' had all the ingredients for this to be cast as 'just' war in the interest of 'democracy and freedom'. Perhaps unsurprisingly the rhetoric that surrounded the conflict drew upon the traditional view of Britain as the island nation and in the press evoked images of Drake, Nelson and especially the Second World War.[895] As Noakes has suggested it demonstrated that:

> during the years of economic decline, the end of empire and an increasingly subordinate relationship to the United States the popular memory of [the Second World] war survived as a widely held image of a time when Britain was 'great'.[896]

The Falklands crisis was, at least in the way it was presented, an old-fashioned engagement, as O'Hara notes, 'Much of the conflict was perceived and understood in

[893] Nancy Banks-Smith, 'Television', *Guardian*, 7 January 1976.
[894] 'Teleguide', *Daily Express*, 14 June 1973.
[895] See O'Hara, *Britain and the Sea*, pp. 215-6 and Kevin Foster, *Fighting Fictions: War, Narrative and National Identity* (London: Pluto Press, 1999), especially pp. 39-42.
[896] Noakes, *War and the British*, p.4.

terms that most naval thinkers from the past 400 years would have understood'.[897] It was also the way that that naval history had been understood on film. In the press the conflict could be presented as a clear national moral crusade. As the *Times* put it 'We are all Falklanders now'.[898] It bore the marks of Britain's perception of its previous naval wars – a mighty dictator against a tiny island nation - Britain was the Falklands and vice versa.

Hill links the Falklands crisis and the resurgence in British cinema to the international success of *Chariots of Fire* which first came out in 1981, but was re-released a year later at the same time as the crisis:

> In a sense, the coincidence of Oscar-winning success in Los Angeles and subsequent military victory in the Falklands seemed to link the two events together and the idea of a national resurgence in both cinema ('the British are coming') and national life became intertwined'.[899]

This is without doubt a tenuous assertion, but what it does point towards is a moment of a heightened sense of national identity, precipitated by naval conflict. As previously mentioned this was by no means a universal reaction. Thanks to the controversial sinking of the *Belgrano*, ideological opposition to the Thatcher government in general, and their response to Argentinan aggression in particular, divided opinion. The Falklands crisis did not lead to a major film that centred on naval action, although the idea was broached[900] - instead, it was television that offered a fictional representation of the crisis. The controversial elements of the war were perhaps why the BBC chose to approach the conflict with a historical play:[901] *The Falklands Factor* (1983), which dealt with the 1770-71 threat from Spain to British sovereignty of the Falkland Islands. This play was concerned, in particular, with the question of whether going to war was necessary to resolve the conflict and was not a celebratory statement. This historical turn on screen was not an isolated case: it was

[897] O'Hara, *Britain and the Sea*, p. 215.
[898] 'We are all Falklanders Now', *Times*, 5 April 1982.
[899] Paul Hill, 'British Cinema as National Cinema', in Valentina Vitali and Paul Willeman, *Theorizing National Cinema* (London: BFI, 2006), p. 100.
[900] Hugo Young, quoted in Hill, 'British Cinema as National Cinema', p.100.
[901] In 2002 the BBC produced another play, *The Falklands Play* (Michael Samuels 2002) which looked at the Conservative government's 'behind-the-scenes' entry into the war. Originally it had meant to be produced in 1986 but was considered to give too positive a view of Margaret Thatcher in the lead up to the 1987 election. See Keith Shuaib, 'The Falklands Play', accessed at www.screenonline.org.uk/tv/id/1205530/index.html [accessed 31 January 2010]

increasingly the main expression of Britain's relationship with the sea and had been building from the 1970s in television historical dramas.

4.0 Television Historical Drama

4.1 *The Onedin Line*

The Onedin Line, which ran for eight series from 1971 until 1980, was unique not only as the sole merchant naval historical series that has ever been produced, but also as the longest running maritime series. Set in Liverpool in the 1860s -1880s, it followed the fortunes of the Onedin family as from a start in a ship chandlers business they built up a shipping line and became involved in shipbuilding. Much of the drama was derived from the love and relationships of the family members, but the series covered a surprising number of maritime issues, including: technological change, safety, working conditions, law, political situations, diplomacy, war and the minutiae of business dealings. It dealt with major shifts in the maritime sphere, most notably the change from sail to steam and the impact this had on workers. Given the fortunes of the contemporary British shipbuilding industry at the time this was potentially a highly relevant theme.

The *Onedin Line* was one of the BBC's most successful series, as demonstrated by its longevity despite its expense. According to the Head of the BBC it was 'his second best seller of all times'.[902] Ultimately the series was screened in 66 countries and in 1997 was still the fifth bestselling programme that the BBC had ever made. [903] In spite of this popularity the reviews from the quality press on its first broadcast were scathing. For example Alan Coren in the *Times* dismissed it as incomprehensible if the viewer had not seen previous episodes[904] and the *Guardian* said that:

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[902] Sir Charles Curran quoted by Harvey Unna (agent for Cyril Abraham, creator of the series) in a letter to the BBC December 13, 1973, WAC T/62/3. By 1992 it was claimed in the *Guardian* that *The Onedin Line* was watched in 66 countries. (Robert Leedham, 'Short Cuts', *Guardian,* 24 October 1992.).
[903] 'Fatter Purse for BBC from Abroad', *Guardian,* 3 March 1997.
[904] '*The Onedin Line*', *Times,* 26 April 1976.

> ...someone at the BBC must have decided it had the necessary chewing gum elasticity to stretch into a series[905], although it can have received virtually no critical reaction... It is, in fact, a rather childish costume drama and, perhaps the BBC's idea of an-end-of-the-week-treat.[906]

Even in the one line listing descriptions of programmes, the *Times* did not hide its disdain: 'Congratulations to the scriptwriters of the *Onedin Line* who have managed to dream up yet more episodes'.[907] These reviews barely even mentioned the actual content of the programmes or the actors. In comparison the tabloid press embraced the series, mostly reporting on the actors themselves. For example the *Daily Mirror* critic wrote: 'I shouldn't keep on saying how good the *Onedin Line* is – but I will,'[908] and commented that:

> The *Onedin Line* looks like a winner to me. Peter Gilmore as the dour, attractive James Onedin pitches his characterisation exactly right for the time and character of an ambitious profit-seeking North countryman.[909]

Onedin was recognisably from Northern England by accent, but the accents of the rest of the cast varied widely. The series was supposedly set in Liverpool, but there was no sense of that city and the series remained essentially regionally neutral.

In the *Radio Times* James Onedin was explained in naval terms and was described as 'something of a working class Hornblower'.[910] This was somewhat wide of the mark. Onedin, although not without charm, is ruthlessly ambitious, self-serving, as likely to con his family as business associates and with little interest in public service. His similarities with Hornblower were those that had been long associated with sea captains: for example his prowess as a sailor (always the saving grace of graceless captains on film as was seen in the study of *Mutiny on the Bounty*) and his resourcefulness in acting unconventionally or against the rules although for greater profit rather than the greater good.

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[905] It was originally screened as a single play as part of the Drama Playhouse shown on 7 December 1970 with mostly the same cast.
[906] Nancy Banks-Smith, 'Television', *Guardian*, 16 October 1971.
[907] 'Weekend Broadcasting', *Times*, 15 July 1978.
[908] 'Second Fiddle', *Daily Mirror*, 26 November 1971.
[909] 'Right on the Line', *Daily Mirror*, October 29, 1971.
[910] *Radio Times*, 25 April 1976.

The promotion for the series in the *Radio Times* was also based on pre-existing maritime representations that had little to do with the actual production. One of the cast members was quoted as saying that he liked the *Onedin Line* 'as a splendid swashbuckling costume drama',[911] although there was hardly a sword in sight. Another article referred once again to idea of the sea as a part of British heredity in sentiments similar to those expressed by Lejeune some thirty years earlier:

> Sailing ships exercise a queer hold on the English imagination. There is nothing like a square-rigger for reminding even the weediest of chain-smokers that he's really a heart of oak; the rightful heir to the tradition of Nelson and Drake and the great maritime adventurers of empire.[912]

The quote also referred to the traditional chronology of Drake and Nelson, and expressed the interest of the sea in naval rather than merchant terms. This was reflective of the pervasiveness of the ideas that had abounded since the turn of the nineteenth century. It also highlighted the fact that there was no screen tradition of the representation of the historical Merchant Navy.

4.2 Historical Drama after the *Onedin Line*

The *Onedin Line* was representative of a trend for costume drama series during the 1970s with programmes such as *Upstairs Downstairs* (1971 -1975), and *Poldark* (1975 -1977). In 1973, when Shaun Sutton, Head of BBC Drama, said that there would be a change of emphasis that year away from the classical drama to more modern settings, the television critic Peter Fiddick somewhat prematurely announced 'The age of nostalgia is declared dead. Well Amen to that'.[913] Instead, it was just the beginning of the nostalgia boom, as Claire Monk has stated,

> Writing at the start of the twenty-first century, it can be stated uncontroversially that films and television dramatisations set in the past form an established, enduring popular and reliably exportable strand of British moving image culture.[914]

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[911] Frederick Jaeger quoted in *Radio Times*, 13 September 1980.
[912] 'Chartered Enchantment', *Radio Times*, 22 July 1979.
[913] Peter Fiddick, 'The Age of Nostalgia is Declared Dead', *Guardian*, 26 November 1973.
[914] Claire Monk, 'The Heritage Debate Revisited', in Claire Monk and Amy Sargeant (eds), *British Historical Cinema: The History, Heritage and Costume Film* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 176.

In the latter part of the twentieth century and at the beginning of the twenty-first the most significant, of the few maritime fictional screen representations, have been historically based and within what is often termed the 'heritage film' phenomenon.[915] *Hornblower* (1998- 2003) and *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World,* (2003) were both set in the Napoleonic War. Both were based on fictional series, C.S. Forester's Hornblower novels and Patrick O'Brian's Aubrey/ Maturin novels respectively.

Hornblower, at approximately £12 million was the most expensive television drama produced to that point. The budget included provision for a wooden hand-built three-masted frigate, the first to be commissioned in 150 years.[916] Reviews for the series, which consisted of eight feature length episodes over five years, were generally mediocre, especially in the quality press. Despite the cost, and the fact that for television the production values were high, the ship scenes were criticised in an era for which CGI has set up considerable expectations:

> Predictably, it was the seafaring set-pieces that caused the production team the prickliest problems. Occasionally the ships looked like real ships, but there were never enough of them. When several vessels were seen in close proximity to one another, supposedly sailing at speed and poised to do battle, the effect was ruined by the fact that the ships were stationary.[917]

The acting too was criticised for being wooden,[918] and some episodes were slow.[919] It was also characterised as a 'Boys Own' serial, and as old fashioned in a positive sense:

> Hornblower doesn't conform to the pattern of most of today's TV drama. It lacks sex scenes (even the 19th-century cabin boys are safe), makes a clear distinction between good and evil, and glorifies British-is-best patriotism. And the rough seamen down in the fo'c'sle never resort to the kind of language routinely employed these days before and after the watershed. ...Beautifully filmed, with realistic shipboard scenes, they reawaken for me the thrill as a lad of reading C. S. Forester's tales of a young, idealistic naval officer serving in the Napoleonic Wars.[920]

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[915] For a discussion on this see Claire Monk, 'The Heritage Debate Revisited', pp. 176-198.
[916] 'Swashbuckling but in need of more Swash', *Times,* 8 October 1998.
[917] 'Stand by to Repel Viewers', *Guardian,* 8 October 1998.
[918] 'Television Review', *Independent,* October 8, 1998.
[919] 'Last Night's View: Alas Hornblower went on a Bit', *Daily Mirror,* 26 March, 2002.
[920] 'Hornblower: Mutiny', *Daily Mail,* 25 March 2002.

This was turned almost to jingoism in the *Daily Star:*

> Rollicking, ripping yarns like last night's *Mutiny*... are packed to the gunnels with old-fashioned virtues - comradeship, discipline, decency and duty and obeying orders, for king and country, right or wrong. It's easy and tempting to put a modern spin on Forester's stories. I bet the BBC would if they'd got their hands on the rights and could afford the locations and hardware. Our hero would be a troubled soul, agonising about the human rights of the men below decks and anxious to reach a settlement with the French and the Spanish rather than hunt them down like dogs and blow them to smithereens. As usual, the British - particularly the English - would be shown to be in the wrong at every available opportunity. Colonialism, empirebuilding - it's just not on, sir. Hornblower's strength is to play it absolutely straight.[921]

Chapman points out that reviews of *Master and Commander,* which were generally positive, also repeatedly referred to the film as 'old-fashioned' and he argues that the ideology of the film was reminiscent of the films of the 1930s and 1940s:

> The politics of the film, rather than reflecting the modern world, seem like a throwback to the propaganda films of the Second World War which had presented Britain as a defender of democracy and freedom against continental tyrants and dictators... *Master and Commander* begins with an explanatory caption that could have been lifted from one of the wartime propaganda films: 'April – 1805. Napoleon is the master of Europe. Only the British Fleet stands before him. Oceans are now battlefields'. This history represents the dominant popular understanding of the Napoleonic Wars: a world war in which Britain, by dint of its Naval power, saved the rest of the world from the territorial ambitions of the dictator Bonaparte.[922]

In some respects both productions returned directly to the ideals of the navy as promoted at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is perhaps telling that while both were based on fictional heroes and thus a step removed from dealing directly with British maritime history, they could both still celebrate a past age of British supremacy. They were, however, no longer counterbalanced by modern representations of the navy or the wider maritime sphere and in that may have contributed to a state of sea-blindness. Evidently there had been a shift in the prominent role that the maritime sphere had as a key signifier of the nation on screen

[921] 'Horatio is back and Rollicking, Hello Sailor', *Daily Star*, 25 March 2002.
[922] Chapman, 'This Ship is England!', p.61.

and the chapter now turns to consider some potential reasons for the decline of the maritime film.

5. The Decline of the Maritime Film

It is possible to point to some reasons for the decline of the maritime film although all of these points require further investigation. First, from a practical economic point of view as indicated there were fewer British films being made and water based films are notoriously expensive to produce. Second, as demonstrated in the chapter on the immediate post-war period there was a growing weariness amongst critics towards the maritime film and this may have contributed to them going out of fashion. Third, how to represent the modern navy on film became more complicated in terms of presenting a solely British or even solely naval perspective. The navy operated mostly under the umbrellas of the MOD after 1964 or the United Nations. Nuclear weaponry may also have contributed to these complications. The anti-disarmament movement was particularly strong in Britain between 1958 and 1964 and during the 1980s.[923] This political sensitivity may have made it less easy to present the navy in the unequivocally positive light that it always had been on screen.

Fourth, the decline in the size of the navy and the maritime industries meant that the post-war and post National Service generations were much less likely to have had any experience of the navies, either first hand or second hand via family members. Maritime scenarios may well have been seen as less relevant to the younger age group, now divorced from the maritime sphere, but who now formed the greater part of the cinema audience. This may explain the decline of naval comedy in particular, as they had often dealt with contemporary issues and hence with situations that resonated with the audience.

In terms of commercial shipping it should be noted however that it was still very important to the Britain by the end of the twentieth century. 95% of its trade was transported by sea and it was the fifth largest trading nation in terms of GDP

[923] Martin Ceadal 'Britain's Nuclear Disarmers', in Walter Laquer and Robert Hunter (eds), *European Peace Movements and the Future of the Western Alliance* (New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1985), p. 218.

exported.[924] Low public awareness of these facts has been attributed to the phenomenon of 'sea-blindness': a lack of awareness of the role played by the maritime sphere.[925] This perceived decline in importance may also have contributed to the lack of cinematic representation.

As has been seen throughout this thesis the maritime film was used as a conscious expression of British identity, coinciding with the moment of Empire. Did the break-up of Empire also play a role in the decline of the maritime film? The extent to which Empire and its subsequent decline impacted upon British national consciousness and identity has been the subject of much debate over the last twenty years.[926] Views are split essentially between those who contend that British society was saturated in imperial culture lasting into the late twentieth century and those who maintain that the Empire had minimal impact on domestic popular culture. This lack of consensus complicates an assessment of how significant a role the break-up of Empire played in the decline of the maritime film. The issues of Empire were never the main focus or setting for maritime films between 1900 and 1960. It did, however, inform much of the rhetoric surrounding the navy. The representation of the naval officer in particular was clearly informed by Victorian notions of imperialist ideals. The navy and shipping featured lightly in the British-made films which historians such as Landy have identified as specifically 'Empire' films made in the 1930s such as *Sanders of the River* (1935), *King Solomon's Mines* (1937) and *The Four Feathers* (1939).

[924] Ibid., p. 280.

[925] See Commodore Steve Brunton, 'Future Surface Combatants: A Military and Industrial Challenge', Royal United Services Institute, www.rusi.org/downloads/assets/RDS_Brunton_Feb09.pdf [accessed 22 February 2011], p. 37, and Geoffrey Till, *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2009), p.104.

[926] For example historians who have perceived a wide impact on national consciousness see John M. Mackenzie, *Propaganda and Empire: The Manipulation of British Opinion1880-1960* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984) and Stephen Heathorn, *For Home, Country and Race: Constructing Gender, Class and Englishness in the Elementary School 1880-1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000). Bernard Porter contests the idea that British popular culture was saturated and informed by Empire in *The Absent-Minded Imperialists: Empire, Society and Culture in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, First Published 2004, New Edition, 2006), although his view has been partially challenged by Andrew Thompson in *The Empire Strikes Back: The Impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-nineteenth Century* (London: Longman, 2005). Several historians including Stuart Ward and Stephen Howe have argued that the effects of de-colonisation and the break-up of Empire had minimal impact in Britain: see Stuart Ward, *British Culture and the End of Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001); Stephen Howe, 'Internal Decolonization? British Politics since Thatcher as Post-Colonial Trauma', *Twentieth Century British History*, 14 (2003), pp. 264-285. Counter arguments to this view can be seen in both MacKenzie's work cited above and in Bill Schwarz's work including 'Reveries of Race: The Closing of the Imperial Moment' in Becky Conekin, Frank Mort, and Chris Waters (eds), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964* (London: Rivers Oram, 1999).

Likewise in the post-war period the most prominent Empire-related British films, such as *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1968) and *Zulu* (1964) did not focus on the maritime world. Direct references to issues such as colonisation and slavery were rare and more likely to be found in American made films such as *The Sea Hawk*, *Mutiny on the Bounty* and later productions such as *Lord Jim* (1965). On the surface this would seem to concur with Porter's idea that Empire was more significant in the perception of Britain abroad than at home.[927] In respect of cinema, however, this assertion would require a much wider survey of the representation of Empire on film.

Chapman identifies a shift in the historical film in the 1960s which represented British history in a more critical and sceptical form. He cites *Zulu* (1964) as a major transitional film which combined 'heroic spectacle and ambivalence towards militarism and imperialism'.[928] At the same he notes that there was a division in the historical film between those that attempted to appeal to a younger audience and those that followed traditional formats. This fragmentation was clearly seen in the maritime films of the 1950s between the traditional naval format of *The Battle of the River Plate* and the more critical edge projected in *Passage Home.* The maritime film, however, never became the locus of military scepticism and productions such as *Master and Commander* and the television series *Hornblower* continued to promote a conservative notion of British character informed by imperialist ideals. The fact that the continuity of Empire in the maritime film was expressed more by character than by theme or setting relates to Wendy Webster's idea of a contradictory story in post-war culture: 'one that both offered a romance of manliness but simultaneously – informed by knowledge of the end of empire – registered its loss.'[929] This also suggests a level of nostalgia which could be discerned in late twentieth maritime film in its bias toward the historical sailing navy and its turn away from the portrayal of the contemporary navies. The impact of the decline of Empire may therefore have contributed to the historical turn of the maritime film, but not necessarily to its overall decline.

[927] Porter, *The Absent-Minded Imperialists.*
[928] Chapman, *Past and Present: National Identity and the British Historical Film*, pp. 321-22.
[929] Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 186.

The decline of the maritime film was part of a wider trend that saw the links between Britain and sea become less vital in the late twentieth century. The link to Empire had been implicit in the symbol of the navy as a central to British identity and this had fallen away. On the surface it would also appear that many of the other linkages which had allied the navy to state from the beginning of the century became less robust. For example the identification with the Royal Family became less pronounced with the exception of the brief interlude of Prince Andrew's participation in the Falklands War. The navy had been traditionally been the service joined by members of the Royal Family but it is significant that both Prince William and Prince Harry chose to join the army. Responding to the impact of the Trafalgar bicentenary Connelly implies the decline of the centrality to the navy to nation, suggesting 'only by direct state intervention in the National Curriculum can the role of the navy, Nelson, and the sea be more fully instilled in British life.'[930] As this suggests maritime matters were less prominent in education by the end of the century.

While all of these factors need to be considered in greater depth it is clear that the maritime as a symbol of national identity had become less resonant by the end of the twentieth century: although this is not a clear cut story. First the experience of the Falklands War showed how quickly old notions of British seapower could be reignited in national propaganda. Secondly the maritime heritage industry flourished especially alongside port regeneration (from the late 1980s onwards) as the maritime industries declined. Britain currently hosts approximately 155 maritime museums or 'experience' centres. This is actually a conservative figure as it only includes museums that are specifically dedicated to a maritime purpose and does not include the profusion of local history museums which are predominately maritime-orientated due to their location or national museums that have large maritime collections. Likewise, film and television took an historical turn. The majority of films discussed in this thesis represented national concerns using the maritime film to promote a unified country or particular codes of behaviour and drew upon heritage to reinforce these ideas. It must be assumed that as a symbol of Britishness in late twentieth century the navy became less useful as an aspect of state identification: but remained resonant as an aspect of heritage or cultural memory. This, appears to be borne out by

[930] Mark Connelly, 'Trafalgar: Back on the Map of British Popular Culture? Assessing the 2005 Bicentenary' in Hoock (ed), *History Commemoration, and National Preoccupation*, pp. 84, 102.

the representation of the maritime world on film and television during the late twentieth century: but this is a tentative conclusion that requires a much wider cultural analysis to work out both its veracity beyond the world of film and the precise reasons for its functioning.

Thesis Conclusions

This thesis draws four main conclusions. First, that the depiction of the maritime sphere was a major part of cinematic discourse in the first half of the twentieth century at an intersection between filmmakers, critics, intellectuals and audiences. The volume of maritime representations remained high through the first half of the twentieth century and formed a significant part of the discussion on national identity. The extent to which cinema embraced the cult of the navy and naval issues in the Edwardian period has not been fully recognised as historians have not previously appreciated the sheer number of films made that related to the maritime. Up until the 1ate 1930s, these films were seen to be part of a conscious cinematic dialogue on how film could or should be used in projecting the nation on screen. During the Second World War, as has been previously identified by historians, the Royal Navy was immediately used as a subject for propaganda films and outnumbered depictions of the other services especially in the first half of the conflict. In the period of post-war readjustment maritime film continued to be used in the discussion of social issues but was divorced from the contemporary issues of the maritime sphere. This break in contemporary relevance coincided with the decline of the maritime industries and the downsizing of the Royal Navy. The heritage of the sea became the province of the heritage film.

Second, the relationship between the sea and national identity established in the late Victorian and early Edwardian period remained largely intact throughout the twentieth century. The late nineteenth century configuration of the sea and national identity as outlined in chapter one can be seen to have had a profound influence on maritime films over the entire period considered in the thesis. Froude's emphasis upon the Protestant heroes of Hakluyt, the defeat of the Armada combined with the emphasis upon the Napoleonic wars during the nineteenth century bears similarities with Colley's thesis that Britishness was predicated upon wars with France and Protestantism.[931] She argues that:

[931] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 3rd Edition, 2009), p.4.

> The sense of a common identity here did not come into being...because of an integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures. Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and above all in response to conflict with the Other.

This analysis gives some clues as to how the maritime film operated. Regional identities were always obscured by these films which tended to emphasise a united Britain. This is because they were largely made in time periods when Britain faced global market competition, power struggles within Europe or international conflict. In these climates the priority was to promote the idea of unity abroad and to encourage co-operation at home. The Royal Navy in particular was continually represented on film as almost synonymous with Britain and it was continually represented as a single nation and not as four nations. Royal Naval personnel were equated with the values and character of the ideal Briton. The rhetoric of the Royal Navy was applied to all maritime activity on film. Although further research would need to be conducted on other institutions on film it is difficult to think of a subject that was as prolific on screen which was portrayed with such continual positivity, and which remained as constant in the mode of its representation. As noted in the introduction to this thesis major surveys of British identity have paid little attention to the navy. This suggests, however, that as a symbol it may have been far more central to the idea of Britishness and national character in the first half of the twentieth century than has been appreciated.

The idea of the 'sea in the blood,' and confidence in the Royal Navy barely flickered over the first half of the twentieth century. In the first third of the century a particular way of representing the navy on screen developed. It was rooted in past success and non-cinematic understandings of the navy but was always anchored to present concerns. The maritime as a symbol of nation on film worked on a number of levels - capable on incorporating national power/ technology/ national character/ and later nostalgia. Although underpinned by identity markers such as religion and difference as identified by Colley, and Empire as discussed by McKenzie these issues were implicitly understood but were not usually articulated on screen (ie Empire was almost never present and the enemy was often absent). The maritime films were nearly all concerned with internal issues of ideal British character, appropriate

behaviour and class, and primarily the maritime film was used to discuss these above the maritime world itself.

Confidence and continuity in the navy was represented by familial tie and links to Drake and Nelson and this inheritance was seen increasingly to extend to all ranks within the navy and not simply its officers until the end of the Second World War. Even when the popularity of the maritime film waned, the television series of late 1970s and the early twenty-first century film *Master and Commander* showed that representations still had much in common with films that had been produced in the first half of twentieth century. There was a remarkable line of continuity and conservatism in the portrayal of the Royal Navy in particular which still had resonance in the early twenty first century. While the linkage of naval symbolism and nation is widely recognised a body of evidence demonstrating their systematic reinforcement over a long period and their deep roots within British culture has not been fully realised.

This persistence of the maritime film and the constancy of its message is proved by this thesis. The act of continual reinforcement is fundamental to how symbols operate in respect of national identity. McCrone for example has suggested in respect of 'Britishness' as a concept that '...it required active and deliberate promulgation to keep it alive.'[932] Mark Connelly has commented in a similar way on identification with the sea. Responding to the events of the bicentenary celebrations of Nelson he suggests that while it generated discussion he was doubtful that it made any significant change in terms of the Official Nelson Commemoration Committee's aims to raise the profile of the role of the navy and the sea in Britain: especially with regards to the young. He suggests that 'only by direct state intervention in the National Curriculum can the role of the navy, Nelson, and the sea be more fully instilled in British life.'[933] In the first third of the twentieth century examining film demonstrates that there was an active promotion of both Britishness and the maritime sphere particularly in respect of the young. It was reinforced by the state, the Royal Family, the Admiralty, educators, historians, critics and filmmakers alike and

[932] David McCrone, 'Unmasking Britannia: the rise and fall of British national identity', *Nations and Nationalism* 3/4 (1997), p. 595.
[933] Connelly, 'Trafalgar: Back on the Map of British Popular Culture?' in Hoock (ed), *History Commemoration, and National Preoccupation*, pp. 84, 102.

seemingly by filmgoers themselves since the films remained popular (or popular enough for commercial companies to continue to invest in them). The image of the maritime sphere was protected and sanitised partly by censorship (the fact that strike action could not be portrayed for example) but mainly by bodies such as the Empire Marketing Board, the MoI as well as by critics and filmmakers.

The idea of the sea and national identity became so embedded as to appear a natural phenomenon that could only be explained in terms of natural inheritance as the quote from C. A. Lejeune that opened this thesis demonstrated as late as the 1950s. Few academic studies have attempted to explain fully this connection since.[934] This thesis offers a strand for understanding that connection by the systematic analysis of its portrayal in a single medium over a long duration.

The strength of the 'sea in the blood' image was two-fold. It did not simply encourage the locus of Britain's strength and power as being in the Royal Navy and ally the nation to the navy as an institution. It was easily extended to encompass all maritime endeavour and to the individual. The sea was in *everyone's* blood regardless of their class or which constituent part of the British Isles they came from. This leads to the third conclusion of this thesis. There have been two major areas in maritime film that have received no significant analysis: the portrayal of the maritime industries and the portrayal of maritime themes through comedy. Yet these films are crucial to any understanding of how the relationship between the sea and national identity was represented. They prioritised the ordinary worker and the ordinary seaman both of whom had been excluded from the Victorian 'grand narrative' upon which cinematic portrayals of the Royal Navy drew. From cinema's beginnings the maritime industries were mostly represented in documentary form. The small body of fictional film borrowed heavily from documentary realism. From the 1930s onwards they increasingly centralised the ordinary worker. A large body of maritime comedies were ignored by contemporary critics, with the exception of the tabloid press. They have been subsequently neglected by film historians. An analysis of these films shows how long lasting the tropes of national identity could be, from the music hall via the cinema to the television comedies in the 1990s. Comedies remained notably

[934] O'Hara offers his survey of Britain and the sea as a potential blueprint for developing the understanding the relationship.

conservative and continued to give an affectionate view of the navy and its sailors in contrast to portrayals of the army in the 1950s and 1960s. The integration of these strands to a wider picture of both national identity and cinema is crucial to understanding the operation of maritime imagery within them. This adds significantly to the studies that have been undertaken on film but which concentrate on the Royal Navy in wartime, such as Rayner's *The Naval War Film* and S. P. Mackenzie's *British War Films 1939-1945*. Both underestimate the integration of comedy and the wider maritime sphere in how effectively the maritime connection was disseminated across different sections of the nation.

The broader social inclusivity that was embraced within the films of the maritime industries, comedy films and the later films of the Second World War, however, did not extend beyond the status quo. It can be said that they largely followed broader social trends in the development of democracy, and in Colville's thesis that demonstrates how naval culture moved from an aristocratic clique to one that embraced middle class values and ideals. The wider picture however was one of omission. The maritime film persisted in the representation of a monoethnic society based upon a normative white, patriarchal, heterosexual family structure. It never found a way to represent women beyond the role of a source of male support or as a sexual object. This concurs with Noakes' findings in her work on the Second World War that 'their role remains a subsidiary one when compared to that of the male involved in combat.'[935]

The fourth conclusion to this thesis is that there are methodological shortcomings to the study of the depiction of such a deep lying subject as national identity within a narrow time period. By drawing on a broader selection of film than any previous study, this thesis has challenged interpretations that concentrate on short term differences rather than examining cinema over a longer duration. The tendency for film historians to concentrate on portrayals of the Royal Navy in the context of the Second World War and its retelling in the 1950s has masked the extent to which the navy could be used in this way only because audiences were already familiar with the naval film as representative of the nation before 1939. This has also obscured the

[935] Noakes, *War and the British: Gender*, p. 164.

large number of films that dealt with the contemporary navy in the discussion of wider social issues before the war. Cinematic developments often attributed to the war, including the portrayal of working class characters and the use of the navy to discuss the nation, were much more partial and less original than is usually appreciated. Likewise the films of the 1950s were marked less by new developments than by continuities from pre-war representations of the maritime sphere. This opens up a wider question of the limitations of examining film in discrete time periods. The comparison solely of films made at the same time is not always helpful. The case study of *For Freedom* in particular demonstrates that its superficial similarities with *The Lion has Wings* have led to a drastic under-estimation of its impact on audiences at the time of its release.

The conclusions show that the examination of single subject on film raises questions of the assumptions that have been made about the nature and shifts in cinematic representation of nation and national characteristics. The influence of early cinema in particular is a serious omission in understanding the processes of transmission and response. Looking at maritime films over the long term discloses the subtle shifts that a concentration of work on the Second World War and beyond has masked in terms of the relationship between the nation, sea and cinema. Without other studies of this kind it is not possible to know how far these insights apply to the representations of other services, institutions and industries. The application of the methodology adopted here could potentially add significantly to the understanding, not only of the part these bodies played in national life, but also to the understanding of the development of film as a medium over the course of the twentieth century. Future studies of national identity, then, particularly in such varied mass media cultures as modern Britain need to take this long term approach across a range of subjects. This thesis has demonstrated some of the ways in which the sense of the 'salt in the blood' was transmitted, but it must close by suggesting that comparative work is still needed on equivalent symbols of nationhood. Only then will it be possible to know just how saline the arteries of Britishness really were.

The following appendices also form the maritime filmography of this thesis. Films cited in the thesis are highlighted in bold.

Table 2: Appendix One: Fictional Maritime Films 1895-2003

The table shows as comprehensive a list as possible of British maritime films made between 1895 and 2003. The selection process is detailed in the introduction to the thesis. It also contains foreign made films that are cited in the thesis or deal with British subjects. Foreign films are indicated by country initials after the title of the film. Lengths of short films, where known, are indicated in the 'Subjects and Notes' field.

Title	Year	Director/Company	Subject and Notes
Arrest of a Pickpocket	**1895**	**R.W. Paul**	**40ft Sailor as hero**
Death of Nelson	**1897**	**Philip Wolff**	**150ft Horatio Nelson, with contemporary song**
Sailor's Departure, The	1898	R. W. Paul	60ft
Sailor's Hornpipe	1898	Levi Jones & Co	70ft Song
Sailor's Return, The	1898	R.W. Paul	60ft
Comic Boxing Match	**1899**	**Warwick**	**150ft Comedy aboard *SS Carisbrooke Castle***
Landing at Low Tide	**1899**	**Haydon & Urry**	**75ft Comedy**
Man Overboard	1899	William Dickson	Sailor falls from *HMS Repulse* and is rescued
Captain's Birthday, The	1901	R.W. Paul	100ft Comedy aboard ship
Cheese Mites, The	1901	R.W. Paul	Trick Film Dancing sailors
Absent Without Leave	1902	Gaumont	145ft Royal Navy
Adventurous Voyage of The Arctic, The	1903	Mitchell & Kenyon	600ft Fantasy
Burlesque Naval Gun Drill	**1903**	**Warwick**	**60ft Comedy, Crew of *HMS Excellent***
Old Love and the New, The	1903	R. W. Paul	100ft Unfaithful sailor
All for the Love of a Geisha	1904	R.W. Paul	540ft RN Officer hero
Jack's Rival	1904	Alf Collins	250ft Romance
Man the Lifeboat	1904	Harold Hough	750ft Drama 8 scenes
Pirates, The	1904	Warwick	300ft RN Sailor escapes pirates

			and warns the fleet
Smugglers, The	1904	Charles Raymond	500ft Cornwall
A Message from the Sea	1905	William Hagger	420ft Drama, Shipwrecked sailor saved by a battleship
Captain Mainstay Starts a Voyage	1905	Sheffield Photo Company	
Death of Nelson, The	**1905**	**Lewin Fitzhammon**	**Horatio Nelson**
Gipsy Fortune Teller, The	1905	Alf Collins	190ft Drama, sailor as hero
Incidents in the Life of Lord Nelson	**1905**	**Harold Jeapes**	**820ft 14 Scenes of Horatio Nelson, actuality and re-enactment**
Jack's Return	**1905**	**Alf Collins**	**465ft Sailor as hero**
Old Homestead, The	**1905**	**Tom Green**	**240ft Sailor as hero**
Sailor's Sweetheart	**1905**	**Cricks and Sharp**	**166ft Comedy Romance**
Sailor's Wedding, The	1905	Percy Stow	925ft Drama
A Naval Engagement	**1906**	**Harold Hough**	**450ft, Comedy, sailor and policeman in a fight**
A Sailor's Courtship	1906	Alf Collins	185ft Comedy Romance
Old Lie and the New, The	1906	R.W. Paul	100ft Unfaithful sailor
Pirate Ship, The	1906	Lewin Fitzhammon	450ft Sailor as hero
Rescued by a Lifeboat	1906	Alf Collins	350ft Sea rescue, Margate
A Sailor's Lass	**1907**	**Lewin Fitzhammon**	**300ft Sailor as hero, Bognor**
Dying of Thirst	1907	Lewin Fitzhammon	175ft Sailor as hero
Four Jolly Sailor Boys from *The Princess of Kensington*	1907	John Morland	Song
Nelson's Victory	**1907**	**Max Darewski**	**Horatio Nelson**
Saved by a Sailor	1907	J. H. Martin	535ft Drama
Saved from the Burning Wreck	1907	Cricks and Sharp	Drama, sea rescue
Saved from the Sea	1907	Cricks and Sharp	455ft Drama, fishermen and shipwreck
Wreck of the Mary Jane, The	1907	Percy Stow	560ft Sea rescue, lifeboat
After Many Years (US)	**1908**	**David Wark Griffith**	**Enoch Arden scenario**
A Modern Grace Darling	1908	T. J. Gobbett	690ft Fishermen saved from scuttled boat
Black-Eyed Susan	1908	Gaumont	880ft Period Royal Navy court martial

Captain's Wives, The	1908	Percy Stow	Comedy, sailor with wife in every port
Deserter, The	1908	Lewin Fitzhammon	425ft Comedy
Little Mother, The	1908	James Williamson	620ft Drama, sailor returns
Little Waif and the Captain's Daughter, The	1908	Percy Stow	400ft Stowaway saves captain's daughter
Napoleon and the English Sailor	1908	Alf Collins	437ft
Phantom Ship, The	1908	J.H. Martin	490ft Trick film
Pirate Ship, The	1908	Dave Aylott	350ft Rescue from pirates
Saved from the Sea	1908	Gaumont	815ft Fishermen
Sturdy Sailor's Honour	1908	Gaumont	764ft
Twixt Love and Duty; or a Woman's Heroism	1908	A.E. Colby	455ft Crime, burning ship
Weary Willie Steals a Fish	1908	Lewin Fitzhammon	575ft Trick film, submarine
When Our Sailor Son Comes Home	1908	Williamson & Co	465ft
Captain's Honour	1909	Tyler	695ft Shipwreck
Consul Crosses the Atlantic	**1909**	**Charles Urban**	**808ft Comedy *SS George Washington***
Lass Who Loves a Sailor, The	1909	Charles Urban	445ft Girl posing as sailor saves sweetheart from burning ship
Last Year's Timetable	1909	Lewin Fitzhammon	425ft Romance, Flirty sailor returns to lover
Lighthouse Keeper, The	1909	Walturdaw	590ft Crime
One of the Bulldog Breed	1909	Joe Rosenthal	523ft Sailor as hero
Peril of the Fleet	1909	S. Wormald	535ft RN, espionage
Sailor's Belt, The	1909	Urban-Eclipse	483ft
Saved from the Sea	1909	Lewin Fitzhammon	300ft Drama Sailor returns to save family from eviction
Shipmates	**1909**	**H. O. Martinek**	**440ft, Adventure, sailor as hero**
Three Sailormen and a Girl	1909	Percy Stow	495ft Comedy
Wanderer's Return: Or Many Years After, The	1909	Dave Aylott	505ft Sailor returns, kills himself finding wife remarried
When Jack Comes Home	1909	A.E. Coleby	380ft Drama Romance
When Jack Got His Pay	1909	A.E. Coleby	500ft Crime, sailor saved from robbers
A Sailor's Lass	1910	Lewin Fitzhammon	425ft Romance Sailor wins girl Lulworth

A Sailor's Sacrifice	1910	Theo Bouwmeester	725ft Sailor returns to find wife remarried
Aerial Submarine, The	1910	Walter Booth	750ft Fantasy Flying pirates torpedo liner & then travel under sea
At the Mercy of the Tide	1910	Dave Aylott	Romance
Comrades; or, Two Lads and a Lass	1910	Dave Aylott	475ft Sailor saves wounded rival
Death of Admiral Coligny (GB/FR)	1910	Urban-Eclipse	992ft French Navy
Heart of a Fishergirl	1910	Lewin Fitzhammon	600ft Fishergirl saves sailor from drowning
Heart of Oak	1910	Lewin Fitzhammon	650ft RN Drama Court Martial
Lieutenant Rose and the Chinese Pirates	**1910**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Foreign Spy	**1910**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Gunrunners	**1910**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Robbers of Fingall's Creek	**1910**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Stolen Submarine	**1910**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant's Dinner	1910	Brockliss	RN
Parted to Meet Again	1910	Wilfred Noy	620ft Drama Sailor adopts child from shipwreck
Stowaway, The	1910	Lewin Fitzhammon	Adventure
Two Perfect Gents	1910	Frank Wilson	400ft Tramps change clothes with RN naval officers
A Sailor's Bride	1911	Wilfred Noy	760ft Drama saved from burning ship
Adventures of Lieutenant Daring RN: In a South American Port	**1911**	**Dave Aylott**	**RN Series**
Fisherman's Daughter, The	1911	Theo Bouwmeester	590ft Smugglers
Foreign Spy, The	1911	Bert Haldane	600ft Espionage French spies
In Cottage and Castle	1911	Wilfred Noy	880ft Fisherman hero
Lieutenant Daring RN and the Secret Service Agents	**1911**	**Dave Aylott**	**RN Series, Espionage, Daring saves *HMS Medina***

Lieutenant Rose and the Boxers	**1911**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Royal Visit	**1911**	**Percy Stow**	**RN, Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Stolen Code	**1911**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series, espionage**
Lost Ring; or, Johnson's Honeymoon, The	**1911**	**Theo Bouwmeester**	**465ft Comedy fishermen**
Love or Riches	1911	Theo Bouwmeester	695ft Fisherman's daughter Romance
Pirates of 1920, The	1911	A.E. Coleby	945ft Pirates airship bomb bullion ship
Smuggler's Step-Daughter, The	1911	Lewin Fitzhammon	700ft Smugglers, Lulworth
So Like a Woman	1911	Walturdaw	RN, Espionage
Through Fire to Fortune	1911	Theo Bouwmeester	630ft Shipwreck
Tilly and the Smugglers	1911	Lewin Fitzhammon	625ft Smugglers Lulworth
Tilly's Party	1911	Lewin Fitzhammon	Comedy, RN
Well Done Scouts!	1911	Dave Aylott	595ft Smuggling
A Fisherman's Love Story	1912	Lewin Fitzhammon	575ft Romance
A Tragedy of the Cornish Coast	1912	Sidney Northcote	Crime, Sailor as hero
Against the Tide	1912	Edwin J. Collins	Drama, Fishermen, Devon
Black-Eyed Susan	1912	Percy Nash	Historic, RN 1825 Court Martial
Fishergirl of Cornwall, The	1912	Sidney Northcote	Fishing Romance
Fisherman's Infatuation, A	1912	Wallett Waller	Romance Polperrro Fisherman
From Behind the Flag	**1912**	**Walter Booth**	**Trick Girl's Union Jack produces Sailors, Britannia and King**
Great Anarchist Mystery, The	1912	Charles Raymond	Crime, Espionage, Lighthouse Cornwall
Her Awakening		Hay Plumb	Drama Fisherman saves adulterous wife
Jack the Handy Man	1912	Gilbert Southwell	475ft Comedy Adventure
Lieutenant Daring and the Photographing Pigeon	**1912**	**Charles Raymond**	**RN Series, Espionage**
Lieutenant Daring	**1912**	**H.O Martinek**	**RN Series, Espionage**

and the Plans of the Mine Fields			
Lieutenant Daring and the Ship's Mascot	**1912**	**Dave Aylott**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Daring Avenges an Insult to the Union Jack	**1912**	**Dave Aylott**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Daring Defeats the Middleweight Champion	**1912**	**Charles Raymond**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Darling Quells a Rebellion	**1912**	**H.O. Martinek**	**RN Series. Daring foils an attempted revolution**
Lieutenant Rose and the Hidden Treasure	**1912**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Moorish Raiders	**1912**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Patent Aeroplane	**1912**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Stolen Ship	**1912**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series, Espionage**
Lieutenant Rose and the Train Wreckers	**1912**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose in China Seas	**1912**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant's Bride, The	1912	Bert Haldane	RN
Masked Smuggler, The	1912	Edwin J. Collins	Crime, Smuggling, Devon 1770
Night and Ice (DE)	**1912**	**Mime Misu**	**Titanic**
Plot that Failed, The	1912	P & B Films	Crime Old Sailor
Saved from the Titanic (FR)	**1912**	**Etienne Arnaud**	**Reconstruction of Titanic rescues**
Smuggler's Daughter of Anglesea	1912	Sidney Northcote	Crime, Smuggling
Submarine Plans, The	1912	Gilbert Southwell	RN Submarine
Thief, The	1912	Edwin J. Collins	Crime, Sailor blamed for stealing

Treasure Island (US)	**1912**	**Edison**	**Adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's book**
Vengeance of Daniel Whidden	1912	Edwin J. Collins	Crime, Fisherman as hero, Devon
When Jack Comes Home	1912	Percy Stow	505ft Sailor Romance
A Fishergirl's Love	1913	Edwin J. Collins	Romance, Sailor saves girl from wrecked boat
A Precious Cargo	1913	Hay Plumb	Romance Smuggling Cornwall
Adventures of Joe Sludge AB	1913	Searchlight	Comedy
Bliggs on the Briny	1913	Charles Raymond	Comedy, Pirates
Boatswain's Daughter, The	1913	Theo Bouwmeester	745ft Romance Fishermen
Captain Kidd	1913	Transatlantic	Pirate
Coastguard's Sister, The	1913	Charles Brabin	Crime, Cornwall smugglers
Drake's Love Story	**1913**	**Hay Plumb**	**Historic Francis Drake**
Fisherman's Luck	1913	Bert Haldane	Fishing
Gipsy Hate	1913	Lewin Fitzhammon	Drama Gipsy loves sailor, tries to drown rival
In Fate's Grip	1913	Charles Weston	Melodrama, explosion on ship
Land and Sea	1913	Edwin J. Collins	Trawler man thrown in sea by rival
Lieutenant Daring and the Dancing Girl	**1913**	**Charles Raymond**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Daring and the Labour Riots	**1913**	**Charles Raymond**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Daring R.N. and the Mystery of Room 41	**1913**	**Charles Weston**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Sealed Orders	**1913**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Rose and the Stolen Bullion	**1913**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
Love Dares All	1913	Anderson	Short 825ft Romance sailor and sweetheart
Mifanwy - A Tragedy	1913	Elwin Neame	Woman dreams of a dead fisherman
Partners in Crime	1913	Warwick Buckland	Sailor blamed for smuggler's crime
Reub's Little Girl	1913	H.O. Martinek	Crime, Smuggling Jersey
Sailor's Song	1913	R.W.Booth	Short

Secret Service	1913	Charles Calvert	Crime, Chinaman captures Captain
Shadows of a Great City	1913	Frank Wilson	Crime Ex-Convict sailor saves girl from abduction
Smuggler's Daughter or In the Days of Nelson, The	1913	Crick	RN Napoleonic
Smuggler's Daughter, The	1913	Edwin J. Collins	895ft Crime, Smuggling
Tom Cringle in Jamaica	1913	Charles Raymond	Adventure, Shipwreck
Two Sides to a Boat	**1913**	**B & C**	**Comedy Pursued suffragette hides and thinks sailors intend to tar her**
A Fisher-Girl's Folly	1914	George Pearson	Romance, Fishing
Black-Eyed Susan (retitled In the Days of Trafalgar)	1914	Maurice Elvey	RN Court Martial Smugglers
Chase of Death, The	1914	B. Harold Brett	Fishermen
Daughter of Satan, A	1914	Edwin J. Collins	Espionage, Divers fight for plans stolen by French spy
Desert Island, The	1914	Captain Kettle Films	Shipwreck Pirates
Enemy in Our Midst, The	1914	Wilfred Noy	Crime, RN
Enoch Arden	**1914**	**Percy Nash**	**Drama Shipwreck Cornwall Sailor returns finds wife remarried**
Enoch Arden (US)	**1914**	**Percy Nash**	**Sailor returns to find wife married**
False Wireless, The	1914	H. O. Martinek	Crime, Ship's officer foils thief
Great German North Sea Tunnel, The	1914	Frank Newman	Germans build tunnel under North Sea and invade
Harbour Lights, The	1914	Percy Nash	Crime, RN Lieutenant falsely accused of murder
Huns of the North Sea	1914	Sidney Morgan	Espionage Spy's English wife stops him laying mines Ramsgate
In the Grip of Spies	1914	H. O. Martinek	Espionage, Detective poses as lascar to save naval code from Chinese
Jack Spratt	1914	Toby Cooper	Series Comedy, 6 shorts Sailor’s parrot causes trouble
Lieutenant Daring and the Stolen Invention	**1914**	**Ernest G. Batley**	**RN Series, Espionage**

Lieutenant Daring, The Aerial Scout	**1914**	**Ernest G. Batley**	**RN Series**
Lieutenant Geranium and the Sealed Orders	1914	Dave Aylott	RN
Lieutenant Pimple and the Stolen Submarine	**1914**	**Fred Evans/ Joe Evans**	**Series RN Comedy Espionage**
Lieutenant Pimple's Dash for the Pole	**1914**	**Fred Evans**	**Series Comedy, RN Exploration**
Loss of the Birkenhead, The	1914	Maurice Elvey	Drama, Shipwreck 1852
Nation's Peril, The	1914	Stuart Kinder	Espionage East Coast Minefields
Scallawag, The	1914	Lewin Fitzhammon	Crime, Dock strike
Smuggler's Cave, The	1914	Wallett Waller	Crime Smugglers Cornwall
Terror of the Air, The	1914	Frank Wilson	Espionage, Liner destroyed
That's Torn It!	1914	Percy Stow	Comedy, RN
Thelma; or, Saved from the Sea	1914	Harold Brett	Crime, Fisherman as hero Polperro
Through Stormy Seas	1914	B. Harold Brett	Smugglers, Cornwall
A Child of the Sea	1915	Frank Wilson	500ft Fisherman as hero
A Fight for Life	1915	W.P. Kellino	921ft Crime Sailor as hero
A Marked Man	1915	Frank Miller	Comedy, Sailor tattooed to pose as widow’s lost son
A Son of the Sea	**1915**	**Ernest G. Batley**	**Crime, Sailor as hero**
Admiral's Orders	1915	Harold Weston	War, RN
Bosun's Mate, The	1915	Harold M. Shaw	Comedy
Bosun's Yarn, The	1915	Excel	Comedy
Britain's Naval Secret	1915	Percy Moran	Espionage, RN
Call of the Sea, The	1915	Wallett Waller	Crime Fisherman as hero
Captain Jolly's Christmas	1915	Pyramid	636ft Romance Sailor as hero
Clue of the Cigar Band, The	1915	H. O. Martinek	Crime Smuggling
How Lieutenant Rose RN Spiked the Enemy's Guns	**1915**	**Percy Stow**	**RN Series**
In the Grip of the Sultan	1915	Leon Barry	Adventure, Sailors as hero
Incorruptible Crown, The	1915	Frank Wilson	Crime, Ocean Liner
It is For England	1915	Laurence Cohen	RN

Jack Tar	1915	Bert Haldane	Espionage, RN
Jack the Handyman	1915	Horseshoe	Romance
Jolly's Little Bit	1915	Pyramid	765ft Naval Captain too old to enlist becomes Special Constable
Kineto's Side Splitters No 1	1915	Walter Booth	Trick Film: Dove of Peace, 1st Battleship through Panama Canal, Torpedo
Midshipman Easy	**1915**	**Maurice Elvey**	**RN Historic Based on Marryat novel**
Milestones	**1915**	**Thomas Bentley**	**Shipbuilding 1860-1912**
Pimple's Dream of Victory	1915	Fred Evans	964ft Comedy RN Sailor
Price of Atonement	1915	David Blazer	RN Navy Wrestling Champion
Smugglers, The	1915	Fred Evans	Smuggling, Beachy Head
Terrible Two - A.B.S, The	1915	James Read	720ft RN Comedy Submarine
Wireless	1915	Harry Lorraine	RN Espionage
London's Enemies	1916	Percy Moran	RN Espionage
An Odd Freak	1916	George Tucker	1360ft Sailor sells nephew to a showman as a wild man from Borneo.
Pimple's Nautical Story	**1916**	**Fred Evans**	**Series, Comedy, Sailor recounts tales of escaping whales and a shark**
Auld Robin Gray	1917	Meyrick Milton	Romance, Scotland Shipwreck
Boy Scouts Be Prepared	1917	Percy Nash	Serial, Scouts foil gypsy supplying petrol to U-boats
Heroes of the Sea	1918	Wonder Plays	300ft War, RN, Britannia
Lord Pirrie's Appeal to Shipyard Workers	**1918**	**Pathe**	**Cartoon propaganda for recruitment**
Nelson: The Story of England's Immortal Naval Hero	**1918**	**Maurice Elvey**	**RN Horatio Nelson**
Treasure Island (US)	**1918**	**Chester M. Franklin**	**Adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's book**
Autocrat, The	1919	Tom Watts	Drama, RN, Romance Shipwreck
Flag Lieutenant, The	**1919**	**Percy Nash**	**RN Contemporary**
Man Who Forgot, The	1919	F. Martin Thornton	Romance Cornwall Shipwreck
Queen's Evidence	1919	Edward Godal	Smugglers, Polperro
Romance of Lady Hamilton, The	**1919**	**Bert Haldane**	**RN Nelson**
Westward Ho!	**1919**	**Percy Nash**	**RN 1588 Spanish Armada**
A Gamble in Lives	1920	George Ridgwell	Crime, Ship owner

Calvary	1920	Edwin J. Collins	Melodrama, Fishing
David and Jonathan	1920	Alexander Butler	Adventure, Shipwreck, Africa
Foul Play	1920	Edwin J. Collins	Romance, Shipwreck, Cornwall
Inheritance	1920	Wilfred Noy	Drama, Fishergirl and dockers
Lights of Home, The	**1920**	**Fred Paul**	**Drama, Sailor as hero**
Our Aggie	1920	Jack Denton	Comedy Romance, lover reunited with sailor
Pillars of Society	1920	Rex Wilson	Drama, Shipping magnate
Saved from the Sea	1920	W. P. Kellino	Romance, Fishing
Tidal Wave, The	1920	Sinclair Hill	Romance Cornwall Fisherman
Treasure Island (US)	**1920**	**Maurice Tourneur**	**Adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's book**
Woman of His Dream, The	1921	Rene Plaissetty	Drama, Shipwreck
Lady Hamilton (DE)	**1921**	**Richard Oswald**	**Horatio Nelson**
A Sailor Tramp	1922	Martin F. Thornton	Robbed sailor becomes tramp and saves a ship
A Song of the Sea	1922	Stoll	Fishing/ Sea to illustrate literary works describing maritime subjects
Faithful Heart, The	1922	Fred Paul	RN Captain returns jilts socialite to care for illegitimate daughter
Sea Dogs of Good Queen Bess	1922	Edwin Greenwood	RN Historic Francis Drake
Through Fire and Water	1922	Thomas Bentley	RN
Harbour Lights, The	1923	Tom Terriss	RN Officer as hero (Captain called Nelson)
Heartstrings	1923	Edward Godal	Sailor returns to find wife remarried for sake of child
Boatswain's Mate, The	**1924**	**George Redman**	**Comedy Retired Boatswain swindler**
Lieutenant Daring R.N. and the Water Rats	**1924**	**Percy Moran**	**Series, RN**
The Sea Hawk (US)	**1924**	**Frank Lloyd**	**Merchant Pirate**
Forbidden Cargoes	1925	Fred Leroy Granville	Smugglers Cornwall 1760
Mutiny	1925	F. Martin Thornton	Adventure, Shipwreck
Qualified Adventurer, The	1925	Sinclair Hill	Adventure, South Seas Mutiny
Satan's Sister	1925	George Pearson	Adventure, Pirates Jamaica
Sons of the Sea	1925	H. Bruce Woolfe	RN Two boys from different backgrounds join the navy in 1914
The Ancient	**1925**	**Otto Henry**	**Based on *The Rime of the***

Mariner (US)			***Ancient Mariner***
Flag Lieutenant, The	**1926**	**Maurice Elvey**	**RN Contemporary**
House of Marney, The	1926	Cecil Hepworth	Crime, Sailor as hero
Island of Despair, The	1926	Henry Edwards	Adventure, Shipwreck
Nelson	**1926**	**Walter Summers**	**RN Horatio Nelson**
Robinson Crusoe	1926	M. A. Wetherell	Shipwreck
Second to None	**1926**	**Jack Raymond**	**RN Espionage**
Luck of the Navy, The	**1927**	**Fred Paul**	**RN Contemporary**
Further Adventures of the Flag Lieutenant	1927	W. P. Kellino	RN Espionage
Carry On	**1927**	**Dinah Shurey**	**RN Espionage**
A South Sea Bubble	1928	T. Hayes Hunter	Adventure, Pirate treasure hunt
Mysterious Dr Sin Fang, The	1928	Fred Paul	Crime Series Lieutenant versus Chinese criminal
Number Seventeen	1928	Geza von Bolvary	Crime Sailor as hero
Q-Ships	**1928**	**Geoffrey Barkas**	**Drama Documentary, RN WW1 Submarines**
Sailors Don't Care	**1928**	**W. P. Kellino**	**RN**
Three Passions, The	**1928**	**Rex Ingram**	**Shipbuilding, Lord's son aids seamans' mission and returns to save father's shipyard from strikers**
You Know What Sailors Are	1928	Maurice Elvey	Merchant drama
Admiral's Yarn, The	1929	Dave Aylott	RN
American Prisoner, The	1929	Thomas Bentley	American sailor imprisoned on Dartmoor Napoleonic
Atlantic	**1929**	**E. A. Dupont**	**Drama, Titanic**
Black Waters	1929	Marshall Neilan	Crime
Divine Lady, The (US)	**1929**	**Frank Lloyd**	**Horatio Nelson**
Down Channel	1929	Michael Barringer	Smuggling
High Seas	1929	Clift Denison	Romance
Lady from the Sea, The	1929	Castleton Knight	Romance, Lifeboat, Fishing
Manxman, The	1929	Alfred Hitchcock	Romance, Fisherman
Second Mate, The	1929	J. Steven Edwards	Drama
That Lass of Chandler's	1929	W. J. Sargent	Romance, Conway
Call of the Sea, The	1930	Leslie Hiscott	RN Contemporary Reissued 1938
Why Sailors Leave	1930	Monty Banks	Comedy

Home			
Windjammer, The	1930	H. Bruce Woolfe	Adventure, voyage from Australia
Aroma of the South Seas	1931	W.P. Kellino	Shipwreck, sailors stranded on island
Cape Folorn		E. A. Dupont	Shipwreck Lighthouse
Contraband Love	1931	Sidney Morgan	Cornish village smuggling
Dangerous Seas	1931	Edward Dryhurst	Romance Cornwall smuggling
Down River	1931	Peter Godfrey	Tramp skipper smuggling
I Love to be a Sailor	1931	George Pearson	Harry Lauder Music Hall Song series
In a Lotus Garden	1931	Fred Paul	Musical, RN, Naval officer's fiancée saves him from a Mandarin
Last Tide, The	1931	John F. Argyle	Romance Fishing village, Devon
Men Like These	1931	Walter Summers	Crew trapped in sunk submarine
Middle Watch, The	**1931**	**Norman Walker**	**Comedy, RN, girls taken to sea must be hidden from Admiral**
Rich and Strange	1931	Alfred Hitchcock	Sea Romance Cruise Shipwreck
Splinters in the Navy	1931	Walter Forde	RN Comedy Musical Fight over a Girl
Bachelor's Baby	1932	Harry Hughes	Romance RN retired captain
Ebb Tide	1932	Arthur Rosson	Romance, Docks
Flag Lieutenant, The	1932	Henry Edwards	RN Contemporary Remake of 1919 & 1926 version
Josser Joins the Navy	1932	Norman Lee	Comedy, RN
Midshipmaid	**1932**	**Albert de Courville**	**Comedy, RN**
Monte Carlo Madness	1932	Hanns Schwarz	Musical, Captain gambles to pay crew
Tin Gods	1932	F. W. Kraemer	Royal Marines save a ship
Verdict of the Sea	1932	Frank Miller	Merchant tramp steamer
Channel Crossing	1933	Milton Rosmer	Crime
Dreamers, The	1933	Frank Cadman	Adventure of two sailors
Fear Ship, The	1933	J. Steven Edwards	Ship saved by owner's daughter and mate from fire
Hearts of Oak	**1933**	**M. A. Wetherell**	**WW1 Zeebrugge**
In the Wake of the Bounty (Aus)	**1933**	**Charles Chauvel**	**RN Captain Bligh**
Marooned	1933	Leslie Hiscott	Lighthouse
Sailors Take Care	1933	Premier	Romance
Skipper of the Osprey	1933	Norman Walker	Comedy
Trouble	1933	Herbert Wilcox	Crime, cruise ship
Admiral's Secret, The	1934	Guy Newall	Comedy, RN

Battle, The (UK/ FR)	1934	Nicolas Farkas	Japanese Naval Commander Espionage
Freedom of the Seas	**1934**	**Maurice Varnel**	**RN Espionage World War One**
Jack Ahoy	1934	Walter Forde	Comedy, RN
Java Head	1934	J. Walter Ruben	Historic 1850 Shipbuilder Romance Bristol
King of Whales, The	1934	Challis Sanderson	Adventure, Whaler Africa
Lost in the Legion	1934	Fred Newmeyer	Ship's cooks lost in desert
Luck of a Sailor, The	1934	Robert Milton	Romance, RN
Red Ensign, The	**1934**	**Michael Powell**	**Shipbuilding**
River Wolves, The	1934	George Pearson	Tilbury Docks
Seeing is Believing	**1934**	**Redd Davis**	**Comedy cruise ship**
Treasure Island (US)	**1934**	**Victor Fleming**	**Adaptation of Robert Louis Stevenson's book**
White Ensign	1934	John Hunt	RN Battleship quells a rebellion
Admirals All	**1935**	**Victor Hanbury**	**Comedy, RN**
All at Sea	**1935**	**Anthony Kimmins**	**Comedy, Cruise Liner**
Barnacle Bill	1935	Harry Hughes	Drama, Sailor makes sacrifices for daughter.
Breakers Ahead	1935	Anthony Gilkison	Fisherman Cornwall
Captain Blood (US)	1935	Michael Curtiz	Pirate English doctor sent to Jamaica becomes a pirate
Children of the Fog	1935	Leopold Jessner	Drama, Dockers
Drake of England	**1935**	**Arthur Woods**	**Historic, RN, Francis Drake**
Forever England	**1935**	**Walter Forde**	**RN Based on C.S. Forester novel *Brown on Resolution***
McGlusky the Sea Rover	1935	Walter Summers	Pirate Romance
Midshipman Easy	**1935**	**Carol Reed**	**Historic RN Marryat novel**
Mutiny on the Bounty (US)		**Frank Lloyd**	**Historic, Captain Bligh**
Mystery of the Marie Celeste	1935	Denison Clift	Drama
Phantom Light, The	1935	Michael Powell	Crime, Wrecking, Lighthouse Wales
Riders to the Sea	1935	Brian Desmond Hurst	Drama, Ireland, Woman loses husband and sons to the sea
Rolling Home	1935	Ralph Ince	Comedy Stowaway Smuggling
Trust the Navy	**1935**	**Henry William George**	**Romantic Comedy, RN**
Turn of the Tide, The	**1935**	**Norman Walker**	**Fishing**
Captain's Table, The	1936	Percy Marmont	Ocean Liner murder mystery
Full Speed Ahead	1936	Lawrence Huntingdon	Merchant Steamship company, Romance

Lieutenant Daring R.N	**1936**	**Reginald Denham**	**RN Espionage**
Lloyd's of London (US)	**1936**	**Henry King**	**Historic, Nelson, RN and Merchant Navy**
Love at Sea	1936	Adrian Brunel	Comedy, Cruise Ship
Shipmates O'Mine	**1936**	**Oswald Mitchell**	**RN Reunion WW1 warship crew**
Southern Roses	1936	Frederick Zelnik	Comedy, RN
Strange Cargo	1936	Lawrence Huntingdon	Crime cargo vessel
Toilers of the Sea	1936	Selwyn Jepson	Adventure, set 1824, Steamship
Windbag the Sailor	**1936**	**William Beaudine**	**Merchant Comedy**
You Must Get Married	1936	Leslie Pearce	Comedy, tramp steamer
Against the Tide	1937	Alex Bryce	Fishing, Romance Cornwall
Captain's Orders	1937	Ivar Campbell	Merchant
Catch as Catch Can	1937	Roy Kellino	Crime, transatlantic liner Cruise
Dr Syn	1937	Roy William Neill	Smugglers Dymchurch 1780
Fire Over England	**1937**	**William K. Howard**	**Historical 1580 Spanish Armada**
House of Silence, The	1937	R.K. Nielson Baxter	Crime ,Smuggling Cornwall
Last Adventurers, The	1937	Roy Kellino	Sea Romance Trawler
Mutiny of the Elsinore	**1937**	**Roy Lockwood**	**Merchant mutiny set 1912**
Our Fighting Navy	1937	Norman Walker	Adventure, RN
Ship's Concert	1937	Leslie Hiscott	Musical, Cruise liner
Talk of the Devil	**1937**	**Carol Reed**	**Crime, Shipbuilding**
History is Made at Night (US)	1937	Frank Borzage	Melodrama on a liner, loose links to Titanic
Alf's Button Afloat	**1938**	**Marcel Varnel**	**Comedy, RN**
Dentists, The	1938	Coronel	Comedy, Sailor's try hand as dentists
Double or Quits	1938	Roy William Neill	Crime transatlantic liner
Governor Bradford	1938	Hugh Parry	Historic Mayflower
Hey! Hey! USA!	1938	Marcel Varnel	Comedy, transatlantic liner cruise
Mother of Men	1938	George Pearson	Musical, Fishermen
Old Iron	1938	Tom Walls	Drama, Shipping magnate
Penny Paradise	1938	Carol Reed	Musical, Tug Captain Liverpool
Queer Cargo	1938	Harold Schuster	Pirates, China
Smuggler's Harvest	1938	John R. Phipps	Smugglers Cornwall
Yellow Sands	**1938**	**Herbert Brenon**	**Comedy, Cornwall fisherman**
All at Sea	**1939**	**Herbert Smith**	**Comedy, RN**
Hell's Cargo	1939	Walter C. Mycroft	Oil Tanker
Jamaica Inn	1939	Alfred Hitchcock	Wreckers

Oh Dear Uncle!	1939	Michael Truman	Comedy, Sailors
Shipyard Sally	**1939**	**Monty Banks**	**Musical Comedy, Shipbuilding**
Sons of the Sea	**1939**	**Maurice Elvey**	**RN Naval Intelligence Dartmouth Training College**
Spy in Black, The	**1939**	**Michael Powell**	**RN Espionage World War One**
All Hands	**1940**	**John Paddy Carstairs**	**RN MoI careless talk**
Bringing it Home	1940	John E. Lewis	RN Convoy WW2, MoI
Channel Incident	**1940**	**Anthony Asquith**	**RN/ Merchant Dunkirk MoI**
Escape to Glory (US)	1940	John Brahm	Submarine attack on a liner, US and UK passengers
For Freedom	**1940**	**Maurice Elvey**	**RN, Battle of the River Plate**
Let George Do It	**1940**	**Marcel Varnel**	**Comedy, RN**
Middle Watch, The	**1940**	**Thomas Bentley**	**Comedy RN**
My Favourite Wife (US)	**1940**	**Garson Kanin**	**Based on Enoch Arden scenario**
Neutral Port	**1940**	**Marcel Varnel**	**Comedy, RN**
Owner Comes Aboard, The	1940	Alex Bryce	Taxpayer tours battleship, RN
Sailors Don't Care	1940	Oswald Mitchell	Comedy RN
Sailors Three	**1940**	**Walter Forde**	**Comedy, RN**
Sea Hawk, The (US)	**1940**	**Michael Curtiz**	**Historic, Drake, RN**
Spare a Copper	**1940**	**John Paddy Carstairs**	**Comedy, Espionage, Shipyard**
Traitor Spy	1940	Walter Summers	Espionage, RN
Atlantic Ferry (aka Sons of the Sea)	**1941**	**Walter Forde**	**Historic 1837 Liverpool ship-owners and change from sail to steamships**
Big Blockade, The	**1941**	**Charles Frend**	**RN /RAF**
Convoy	**1941**	**Penrose Tennyson**	**RN / Merchant WW2**
Man at the Gate, The	**1941**	**Norman Walker**	**Merchant Fishing**
Ships With Wings	**1941**	**Sergei Nolbandov**	**RN WW2**
That Hamilton Woman (US)	**1941**	**Alexander Korda**	**Historic, RN, Nelson**
This England	1941	David MacDonald	RN British history including Armada and Nelson
Contraband	**1942**	**Michael Powell**	**Espionage, Danish merchant navy**
Day Will Dawn, The	1942	Harold French	Norway Merchant skipper destroy U-boat base
In Which We Serve	**1942**	**Noel Coward/ David Lean**	**RN WW2**
Mrs Miniver (US)	1942	William Wyler	RN / Merchant WW2 Includes Dunkirk

Sabotage at Sea	1942	Leslie Hiscott	Merchant murder mystery WW2 Convoy
Thunder Rock	1942	Roy Boulting	Fantasy Lighthouse peopled with shipwreck victims 1849
Close Quarters	1943	Jack Lee	RN Submarine WW2
Demi-Paradise, The	**1943**	**Anthony Asquith**	**Comedy, Shipbuilder and Russian inventor**
I'll Walk Beside You	1943	Maclean Rogers	Romance, RN
San Demetrio London	**1943**	**Charles Frend**	**Merchant WW2**
Shipbuilders, The	**1943**	**John Baxter**	**Shipbuilding**
Silver Fleet, The	1943	Vernon Sewell	Norway WW2 Submarine
***Titanic* (DE)**	**1943**	**Herbert Selpin**	**German anti-British propaganda film on the *Titanic***
Volunteer, The	1943	Michael Powell	RN Fleet Air Arm WW2
We Dive at Dawn	**1943**	**Anthony Asquith**	**RN Submarine WW2**
Yellow Canary	1943	Herbert Wilcox	Port Espionage Halifax
Bell Bottom George	**1944**	**Marcel Varnel**	**Comedy, RN**
Fiddler's Three	**1944**	**Harry Watt**	**Comedy , RN, Sailors save Wren**
For Those in Peril	1944	Charles Crichton	WW2 Air Sea Rescue
It Happened One Sunday	1944	Karel Lamac	Comedy, Romance Liverpool Canadian sailor
Lifeboat	1944	Alfred Hitchcock	WW2
My Ain Folk	1944	Germain Burger	Musical, Glasgow Merchant wireless operator
Beyond Price	1945	Cecil H. Williamson	Shipwreck
For You Alone	1945	Geoffrey Faithfull	Musical, Romance, RN
Johnny Frenchman	1945	Charles Frend	Fishing
Perfect Strangers	**1945**	**Alexander Korda**	**RN, HO service, man and wife in Navy and Wrens**
Meet the Navy	1946	Alfred Travers	Musical, Canadian Navy
Piccadilly Incident	**1946**	**Herbert Wilcox**	**Romance, RN Wren**
Ghost and Mrs Muir, The (US)	1947	Joseph L. Mankiewicz	Merchant Sea Romance set in England
Christopher Columbus	1948	David MacDonald	Historic
Night Comes too Soon	1948	Denis Kavanagh	Fantasy Ghosts of sailor, wife and her lover
Scott of the Antarctic	**1948**	**Charles Frend**	**Historic, Exploration, Captain Scott**
Silver Darlings, The		**Clarence Elder**	**Historical, Herring fishing, Scotland**
Whisky Galore	**1948**	**Alexander Mackendrick**	**Comedy, shipwreck**
Born of the Sea	1949	Anthony	Drama, Fishing

		Mavrogordato	
Floodtide	**1949**	**Frederick Wilson**	**Shipbuilding**
Landfall	1949	Ken Annakin	Coastal Command WW2, RN, Based on Neville Shute novel.
Skimpy in the Navy	1949	Stafford Dickens	Comedy
In to the Blue	1950	Herbert Wilcox	Smuggling
Morning Departure	**1950**	**Roy Ward Baker**	**RN Submarine Disaster**
Pool of London	1950	Basil Dearden	Merchant Smuggling, Contemporary
Treasure Island	**1950**	**Bryon Haskin**	**Animated version of Robert Louis Stevenson's book**
Tyrant of the Sea (US)	**1950**	**Lew Landers**	**RN Historic Napoleonic Mutiny**
African Queen, The	1951	John Huston	WW1 Africa
Captain Horatio Hornblower (US/UK)	**1951**	**Raoul Walsh**	**RN Historic Napoleonic**
Ship that Died of Shame, The	**1951**	**Basil Dearden**	**RN / Merchant crime**
Cruel Sea, The	**1952**	**Charles Frend**	**RN Convoy WW2**
Gift Horse, The	**1952**	**Compton Bennett**	**RN WW2**
Albert RN	**1953**	**Lewis Gilbert**	**RN WW2 POW escape**
Laughing Anne	1953	Herbert Wilcox	Romance
Malta Story	1953	Brian Desmond Hurst	RN WW2
Sea Devils	1953	Raoul Walsh	Fishing Romance Smuggling Guernsey Historic
Single-Handed	**1953**	**Roy Boulting**	**RN based on C.S. Forester's Brown on Resolution**
***Titanic* (US)**	**1953**	**Jean Negulesco**	**Drama, *Titanic***
Caine Mutiny, The (US)	**1954**	**Edward Dmytryk**	**World War Two mutiny, US Navy**
Dangerous Voyage	1954	Vernon Sewell	Crime
Forbidden Cargo	1954	Harold French	Crime, Smugglers pose as RN
Hell Below Zero	1954	Mark Robson	Antarctica Whaling
His Majesty O'Keefe	1954	Bryon Haskin	Pirates
Letter from the Isle of Wight, The	1954	Brian Salt	Children's Film, Sea rescue, lighthouse
Maggie, The	**1954**	**Alexander Mackendrick**	**Comedy, Merchant, Glasgow**
Sea Shall not Have Them, The	**1954**	**Lewis Gilbert**	**WW2 Air Sea Rescue**
Seagulls over Sorrento	1954	John & Roy Boulting	RN & US Navy test torpedo Scotland
They Who Dare	**1954**	**Lewis Milestone**	**WW2 Rhodes Special Boat Service**

Up to His Neck	1954	John Paddy Carstairs	Comedy, RN, Submarine
You Know What Sailors Are	1954	Ken Annakin	Comedy, RN
Above Us the Waves	**1955**	**Ralph Thomas**	**WW2 RN, Submarine**
Blue Peter, The	1955	Wolf Rilla	RN Naval hero brainwashed in Korea becomes instructor at Sea School, Aberdovey
Cockleshell Heroes	**1955**	**Jose Ferrer**	**Royal Marines WW2 canoe raid**
Cross Channel	1955	R. G. Springsteen	Crime, smugglers
Doctor at Sea	1955	Ralph Thomas	Comedy, Passenger-carrying cargo steamer
Passage Home	**1955**	**Roy Ward Baker**	**Drama, Cargo ship captain**
Raising a Riot	1955	Wendy Toye	Comedy, RN officer left in charge of children
Sea Chase, The (US)	1955	John Farrow	WW2, RN
Baby and the Battleship, The	**1956**	**Jay Lewis**	**Comedy, RN**
Battle of the River Plate, The	**1956**	**Michael Powell & Emeric Pressburger**	**RN Battle of the River Plate WW2**
House of Secrets	1956	Guy Green	Crime, RN
Jacqueline	1956	Roy Ward Baker	Drama, shipbuilder's son helps him find work
Sailor Beware	1956	Gordon Parry	Comedy, RN
Sailor from Gibraltar, The	1956	Tony Richardson	Romance
True as a Turtle	1956	Wendy Toye	Comedy
Admirable Crichton, The	1957	Lewis Gilbert	Comedy, shipwreck
All Square Aft	1957	Gerard Bryant	Trawler skipper rescues son
Barnacle Bill	1957	Charles Frend	Comedy
Black Ice, The	1957	Godfrey Grayson	Adventure, Trawler
Buccaneers, The	1957	Ralph Smart	Adventure
Carry on Admiral		**Val Guest**	**Comedy, RN**
Devil's Pass, The	1957	Darcy Convers	Devon Stowaway Fishermen Wreckers
Fire Down Below	1957	Robert Parrish	Caribbean Cargo vessel
Heaven Knows, Mr Allison (UK/USA)	1957	John Huston	Marines, Pacific
High Tide at Noon	1957	Philip Leacock	Drama, Nova Scotia Fisherman
Manuela	1957	Guy Hamilton	Stowaway
Not Wanted on Voyage	1957	Maclean Rogers	Comedy, Cruise ship
Sea Wife (UK/ US)	1957	Bob McNaught	WW2 Survivors from torpedoed boat Singapore
Seven Waves	1957	Richard Sale	Drama, Mined liner

Away			
Wonderful Things	**1957**	**Herbert Wilcox**	**Comedy, Fishing**
Yangtse Incident	**1957**	**Michael Anderson**	**RN 1949 HMS Amethyst**
A Night to Remember	**1958**	**Roy Ward Baker**	**Titanic**
A Touch of Larceny	1958	Guy Hamilton	Comedy Romance, RN
Dunkirk	**1958**	**Leslie Norman**	**WW2 RN/ Merchant, Dunkirk evacuation**
Further Up The Creek	**1958**	**Val Guest**	**Comedy, RN**
Girls at Sea	**1958**	**Gilbert Gunn**	**RN Comedy Based on same play as The Middle Watch**
Next to no Time	1958	Henry Cornelius	Comedy, Liner Queen Elizabeth
Sea Fury	1958	Cy Endfield	Salvage tug
Silent Enemy, The	**1958**	**William Fairchild**	**RN WW2 Gibraltar**
The Key	1958	Carol Reed	Romance, Tug-boat Captain
Up the Creek	**1958**	**Val Guest**	**Comedy, RN**
Captain's Table, The	1959	Jack Lee	Comedy, merchant cargo vessel
Navy Lark, The	1959	Gordon Parry	Comedy, RN, based on radio show
Bulldog Breed, The	**1960**	**Robert Asher**	**Comedy, RN**
Caught in the Net	1960	John Haggarty	Children's film, fishermen, Cornwall
Depth Charge	1960	Jeremy Summers	Scotland, Trawler fishing
Fury at Smuggler's Bay	1960	John Gilling	Smuggling Swashbuckler Cornwall
Sink the Bismarck!	**1960**	**Lewis Gilbert**	**RN, WW2**
Watch Your Stern	1960	Gerald Thomas	Comedy, RN
Wreck of the Mary Deare (UK/US)	1960	Michael Anderson	Salvage boat
Valiant, The	**1961**	**Roy Ward Baker**	**WW2, RN**
Watch It Sailor!	1961	Wolf Rilla	Comedy Romance, RN
Petticoat Pirates	**1961**	**David MacDonald**	**Comedy, RN, Wrens**
Billy Budd	1962	Peter Ustinov	Historic RN/ Merchant
Captain Clegg	**1962**	**Peter Graham Scott**	**Smugglers, 1792**
Carry On Cruising	1962	Gerald Thomas	Comedy, cruise ship
HMS Defiant	**1962**	**Lewis Gilbert**	**Historic, RN, 1797 Mutiny**
Mutiny on the Bounty (US)	**1962**	**Lewis Milestone**	**Historic, RN Captain Bligh**
Mystery Submarine	1962	C.M. Pennington-Richards	RN Submarine WW2
Pirates of Blood River, The	1962	John Gilling	Historic, Pirate
Seven Seas to	**1962**	**Rudolph Mate**	**Historic, Sir Francis Drake**

Calais (IT)			
We Joined the Navy	1962	Wendy Toye	Comedy, RN
Sparrows Can't Sing	1963	Joan Littlewood	Comedy, Seamen
Ring of Spies	**1963**	**Robert Tronson**	**RN Espionage Portland**
Carry on Jack	**1964**	**Gerald Thomas**	**Comedy Historic RN 1805**
Devil Ship Pirates, The	**1964**	**Don Sharp**	**Pirates, Cornwall, Horror, Spanish Armada**
Murder Ahoy!	1964	George Pollock	Crime Cadet training
Saturday Night Out	1964	Robert Hartford-Davis	Drama, Seamen on leave
A High Wind in Jamaica	1965	Alexander Mackendrick	Historic 1890 Pirates Jamaica
Bedford Incident, The (UK/ USA)	1965	James B. Harris	US Navy Greenland, Russian Submarine
City Under the Sea, The	**1965**	**Jaques Tourner**	**Fantasy Cornwall 1903 Smuggling**
Lord Jim	1965	Richard Brooks	Merchant shipwreck Malaya 1900
You Only Live Twice	**1967**	**Lewis Gilbert**	**James Bond**
Submarine X-1	1968	William Graham	WW2, RN, submarine
Escape from the Sea	1968	Peter Seabourne	RN Sea Rescue Children's Film Foundation
Lost Continent, The	**1968**	**Michael Carreras**	**Fantasy, Trawler seaweed land of monsters**
All at Sea	1969	Kenneth Fairbairn	Cruise, contraband
Hell Boats	1969	Paul Wendkos	WW2, RN
Lock Up Your Daughters	**1969**	**Peter Coe**	**Comedy, 18 C. Lusty sailors**
Captain Nemo and the Underwater City	1969	James Hill	Fantasy 19 C. Shipwreck Submarine
Mckenzie Break, The	1970	Lamont Johnson	German U-Boat officers escape POW camp Scotland
Murphy's War	1970	Peter Yates	Merchant ship, WW2 U-boat
When Eight Bells Toll	**1971**	**Etienne Perier**	**Hijacking Irish Sea, contemporary RN**
Doomwatch	1972	Peter Sadsy	Horror, Cornwall fishermen
Madame Sin	1972	David Greene	Crime Plot to steal Polaris submarine RN
Treasure Island	**1972**	**John Hough**	**Historic, Buried treasure**
Bequest to the Nation	**1973**	**James Cellan Jones**	**Historic, RN, Nelson**
Golden Voyage of Sinbad, The	1973	Gordon Hessler	Fantasy
Transfusion (UK/ NL)	1973	Mart Ambray	Crime, Fishermen try to blow up oil pipeline

Juggernaut	1974	Richard Lester	RN Bomb disposal liner
Land that Time Forgot, The	**1975**	**Kevin Connor**	**Fantasy, WW1 U-boat attack survivors**
Sailor who Fell from Grace from the Sea, The	1976	Lewis John Carlino	Drama, Sailor
Spy Story	**1976**	**Lindsay Shonteff**	**Defection of Russian Admiral**
Black Jack	1977	Kenneth Loach	Historic 1750 French Sailor in York
Spy Who Loved Me, The	**1977**	**Lewis Gilbert**	**James Bond, US submarines**
Raise the Titanic (UK/ US)	1979	Jerry Jameson	Titanic
Sea Wolves, The	1980	Andrew V. McLaglen	WW2
For Your Eyes Only	**1981**	**John Glen**	**James Bond, ATAC system used to control Polaris submarines stolen**
Bounty, The	**1983**	**Roger Donaldson**	**Historic, RN, Captain Bligh**
Pirates of Penzance, The	1983	Wilford Leach	Musical Comedy, Gilbert and Sullivan
A View to a Kill	**1985**	**John Glen**	**James Bond, Soviet Submarines**
1492: Conquest of Paradise (UK/ FR/ES/ USA)	**1992**	**Ridley Scott**	**Historic, Christopher Columbus**
Captain Jack	1992	John Goldschmidt	Comedy, Whitby Arctic
Carry On Columbus	**1992**	**Gerald Thomas**	**Comedy, Christopher Columbus**
Master and Commander: The Far Side of the world	**2003**	**Peter Weir**	**Historic, RN**

Table 3: Appendix Two: Non-Fiction Maritime Films 1895-1960

Ship launches are listed separately in Table 5: Appendix Three

Official films of World War Two are listed separately in Table 6: Appendix Four.

Title	Year	Director	Notes
Rough Sea at Dover	1895	R.W. Paul	40ft
Steamer in New York Docks	1895	Northern Photographic Works	40ft Merchant steamer arrives
Steamer on Long Island Sound	1895	Northern Photographic Works	40ft Merchant steamer arrives
Arrival of the Paris Express	1896	R. W. Paul	40ft Passengers disembark Calais
Fishwives	1896	Paul's Theatrograph	40ft Women cleaning fish
Ocean Waves in a Storm	1896	Esme Collings	40ft Brighton
On the Calais Steamboat	1896	Paul's Theatrograph	40ft *SS Victoria* Steamer
Passengers Disembarking from *SS Columbia*	1896	Paul's Theatrograph	40ft
Portsmouth: The Ferry	1896	Esme Collings	40ft
Rough Sea at Ramsgate	1896	R. W. Paul	40ft
Sailors of an English Warship	1896	Esme Collings	40ft RN
SS Columbia		Paul's Theatrograph	40ft Leaving Rothesay
Women Leaving Portsmouth Dockyard	1896	Esme Collings	40ft
Yarmouth: Fishing Boats Leaving Harbour	1896	Birt Acres	40ft
Cornish Coast and Sea	1897	Haydon & Urry	Short
HM Battleship Terrible	1897	William Dickson	RN
Hove Coastguards at Cutlass Drill	1897	James Williamson	Short RN
Marines at Vaulting Horse Exercise	1897	Chard's Vitagraph	Royal Marines RN
Naval Brigade at Single Stick Exercises	1897	Chard's Vitagraph	RN
Naval Review	1897	Photographic Association	Spithead RN
Naval Review at Spithead	1897	Mutoscope and Biograph	Spithead RN
Nelson Column, The	**1897**	**William Dickson**	**75ft Trafalgar Day, RN**

Prince of Wales on Board his Yacht *Britannia*	1897	Edisonia	
Spithead Naval Review	1897	Alfred Wrench	RN
Spithead Naval Review	1897	British Cinematograph Co	RN
Steamboat Aeolus Leaving Stockholm	1897	Unknown	40ft Merchant Steamer
Trafalgar Day	1897	W. Watson and Sons	70ft RN
Woodside Ferry, Liverpool	1897	Chard's Vitagraph	Includes shots of wreck of Nelson's ship *Foudroyant*, RN
A Tug in a Heavy Sea	1898	William Dickson	20ft
Admiralty Flag Floating in the Breeze	1898	Warwick	50ft, RN
Arrival at *SS Calais* at Calais Harbour	1898	Cecil Hepworth	50ft, Channel Steamer
Arrival of a Channel Steamer	1898	Warwick	50ft, Channel Steamer
Arrival of *SS Dover* at Dover Pier	1898	Cecil Hepworth	75ft
Arrival of *SS Victoria* at Calais Harbour	1898	Cecil Hepworth	50ft Channel Steamer
Arrival of the Royal Mail Boat at Holyhead	1898	Arthur Cheetham	Short
Attack and Defence by Sailors	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Away Aloft	1898	Mutoscope and Biograph	25ft *HMS Seaflower*, RN
Away Aloft: Climbing the Rigging on Board the *St Vincent*	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Away Boat's Crews	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Bayonet Exercises	1898	Warwick	50ft, RN Recruits
Boats of the Channel Squadron Pulling Round the Fleet	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Call to Arms	1898	Cecil Hepworth	50ft, RN Drilling at *HMS Excellent*
Commander Giving Instructions to Beat to Quarters	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Commander Giving Instructions to Dismiss	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Cruise of *HMS Crescent*	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Dancing the Hornpipe	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Departure of a Transatlantic Liner	1898	Warwick	50ft Leaving Liverpool for New York

Diver at Work in the Docks at Holyhead	1898	Arthur Cheetham	
Early Morning on the *Ceylon*	1898	Prestwich	Sailors cleaning deck, Merchant ship
Forging Ahead	1898	Cecil Hepworth	50ft Prow of *Kinfauns Castle*
Gale at Sea	1898	Warwick	Cornwall
General Quarters *HMS Seaflower*	1898	William Dickson	RN
Goodbye, Southampton	1898	Warwick	Liner *SS Scot*
HMS Crescent Steaming at Full Speed	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Loading Slates in the Dock at Port Madoc	1898	Arthur Cheetham	Short
Locks, Slips, Docks and Station	1898	Warwick	50ft Docks Liverpool
Lumber Docks and Vessels	1898	Warwick	50ft Docks Liverpool
March Past on the Quarter Deck	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Midshipmen at Physical Drill	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Naval Brigade Firing Royal Salute on Southsea Common	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Nelson's Flag Ship Victory	**1898**	**Mutoscope and Biograph**	**RN**
On Board *HMS Majestic*	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
On the Deck of a Channel Steamer	1898	Cecil Hepworth	50ft
Panorama of Plymouth Harbour	1898	Cecil Hepworth	50ft RN
Passing the Cruiser *Crescent*	1898	Unknown	75ft RN
Portsmouth Dockyard Gates	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
RMS Hawarden Castle	1898	Paul's Theatrograph	40ft Leaving for the Cape
Seamen at Drill: Sailors at Single Stick Exercises	1898	George West & Son	RN
Shipping at Southampton Docks	1898	Warwick	40ft
Shipping on the Thames	1898	Paul's Theatrograph	Short
Sports on Board Ship	1898	Prestwich	55ft
Squad Marching and Forming Company	1898	Cecil Hepworth	50ft Drilling at *HMS Excellent*, RN
SS Carisbrooke Castle	1898	Paul's Theatrograph	Series of shorts
SS Scot Leaving Cape Town	1898	Edgar Hyman	Union Liner leaving harbour
SS Victoria Leaving Calais Harbour	1898	Cecil Hepworth	75ft Channel Steamer

Steamers	1898	Paul's Theatrograph	Panorama from a tug
Three Men in a Boat	1898	Mutoscope and Biograph	20ft tug
Torpedo Practice	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Tug in a Heavy Sea	1898	British Mutoscope	20ft
Turbinia	1898	Alfred J. West	Fastest vessel in world at 35 knots
Two Best Dancers in the Navy Dancing on the Forecastle	1898	Alfred J. West	RN
Unloading Cargo at London Docks	1898	Paul's Theatrograph	40ft
Wake of a Steam-Ship	1898	Cecil Hepworth	50ft Channel Steamer
Warships in Plymouth Harbour	1898	Cecil Hepworth	50ft
A Storm in Dover Harbour	1899	Paul's Theatrograph	Short
Arrival of Clyde Steamer	1899	Warwick	75ft *SS Viceroy*
Bayonet Drill By Royal Marine Artillery	1899	Warwick	RN
Blue Jacket's Drill and Exercises	1899	Warwick	Series 6 films Portsmouth Naval Depot, RN
British Battleships	1899	Warwick	Series 5 films, RN
Churned Waters	1899	John Bennett-Stanford	50ft *SS Carisbrooke Castle*
Cricket Match on a Fishing Smack During a Heavy Sea	1899	Warwick	100ft
Crossing the Line	1899	William Dickson	Ceremony crossing the equator
Frigates in Harbour	1899	Cecil Hepworth	50ft
Frigates in Harbour	1899	Cecil Hepworth	50ft RN
Highland Fling on Board the Kinfauns Castle	1899	Warwick	100ft Maiden Voyage
HMS Camperdown	1899	Cecil Hepworth	50ft After collision with *HMS Victoria*
HMS Ocean Preparing for Trial	1899	Cecil Hepworth	RN
Kaiser at Portsmouth, The	1899	Paul's Theatrograph	80ft Salute to *HMS Victory*
Launching Yawl from Fishing Smack During Heavy Sea	1899	Warwick	100ft
Lifeboat Practice	1899	European Blair Camera Co	Short

Lifeboat Procession at Brixham	1899	Warwick	100ft
Mobilization of Bluejackets	1899	Warwick	Portsmouth 3000 men march past
Norwegian Boat Discharging Cargo of Logs	1899	Warwick	50ft
Our Navy	**1899**	**Alfred J. West**	**Series RN**
Overtaking the Cattleship on the High Seas	1899	Warwick	50ft
Panorama of Devonport	1899	Cecil Hepworth	50ft Warships in naval depot
Panorama of the Kinfauns Castle	1899	Warwick	100ft Maiden Voyage
Panorama of Warships	1899	Cecil Hepworth	50ft RN
Panorama of Warships in Dock	1899	Cecil Hepworth	50ft Plymouth, RN
Passengers Boarding the *Dunottar Castl*e	1899	Warwick	50ft
Passengers Preparing to Leave Ship at Durban	1899	John Bennett-Stanford	50ft *SS Carisbrooke Castle*
Press and Other Guests on Board Kinfauns Castle, The	1899	Warwick	100ft Maiden Voyage
Red Cross Nurses and Marines Embarking for the Front	1899	Warwick	75ft *SS Dunottar* Castle Southampton
Repository Drill	1899	Warwick	125ft Royal Marines
RMS Oceanic	1899	Warwick	50ft each Series 8 films Maiden Voyage
RMS Tantallon Castle Entering the Channel	1899	Warwick	75ft Passes *SS Carisbrooke Castle*
Shipping at Southampton Docks	1899	Warwick	50ft
Ship's Passengers Watching the Swells	1899	John Bennett-Stanford	50ft *SS Carisbrooke Castle*
SS Dunottar Castle Leaving Dock	1899	Fuerst Brothers	Southampton
SS Gaika Arriving at Southampton	1899	Warwick	75ft Union Line Steamer
SS New York Leaving Southampton Docks	1899	Cecil Hepworth	50ft
SS St Louis Leaving Southampton for New York	1899	Warwick	75ft American Steamer
Tugs in a Heavy Sea	1899	Warwick	75ft View from steamer in rough sea, Durban
Wooden Walls of Old England	1899	Cecil Hepworth	50ft Obsolete frigates
Wooden Walls of Old England, The	1899	Warwick	75ft, Devenport

Wreck of the *Mohican*	1899	William Dickson	60ft Sailors saved from wreck by Porthonstock Lifeboat
Wreck of the *SS Paris*	1899	William Dickson	30ft Cornwall
4.7 Guns of HMS Terrible Firing Lyddite	1900	William Dickson	RN
4.7 Inch Naval Gun in Action	1900	Joe Rosenthal	50ft Battle of Pretoria
A British 40-Pounder Battery in Action	1900	Warwick	100ft 5 naval gun squads firing
Arrival of *HMS Powerful* at Portsmouth	1900	Warwick	150ft RN
Aurania at Anchor off Netley	1900	Biograph Syndicate	3 films of 6 film series
Battle of Colenso	1900	William Dickson	Series 5 films including HMS Terrible
Big 4.7 Naval Gun in Action at Modder River, The	1900	Warwick	30ft
Blacksmith's Shop in the Navy, The	1900	Walter Gibbons	50ft RN
Bluejackets Enjoying Their Morning Dip	1900	Walter Gibbons	150ft RN
Bluejackets for China	1900	John Wrench & Son	75ft Sailors crossing gangway
Bluejacket's Wash Day	1900	Walter Gibbons	150ft RN
British Navy, The	1900	Cecil Hepworth	Series 20 films RN
Coaling a Battleship at Sea	1900	Warwick	75ft RN
Coaling a Man-o-War at Nagasaki	1900	E. F.G. Hatch	50ft
Crisis in China, The	1900	Walter Gibbons	Series 10 films, RN
Dartmouth Ferry Boat	1900	Cecil Hepworth	50ft
Departure of the *Jeluga*	1900	John Wrench & Son	50ft
Fire Quarters in the Navy	1900	Walter Gibbons	50ft Naval drill, RN
Getting the Hose Pipe	1900	Walter Gibbons	50ft Naval drill, RN
Great Mobilisation of the Marines, The	1900	Walter Gibbons	175ft RN
Gun	1900	Paul's Theatrograph	80ft Sailors drill Chatham
Guns of Naval Brigade Entrained for Royal Tournament	1900	Birt Acres	100ft

Handy Man at Play, The	1900	Walter Gibbons	75ft Sailors play football
Handy Man at Play, The	1900	Walter Gibbons	40ft Sailors waltz to accordion
HM Torpedo Boat Destroyer *Viper*	1900	William Dickson	42ft Newcastle
HM Torpedo Destroyer *Albatross*	1900	Biograph Syndicate	RN Sheerness, Speed trial
HMS Powerful Arriving at Portsmouth	1900	Paul's Theatrograph	80ft RN
HMS Powerful Arriving in Portsmouth Harbour	1900	Cecil Hepworth	50ft
Hyena's Growl, The	1900	Walter Gibbons	85ft, RN Gunnery, Difference between Cordite and Black Powder
Hyena's Growl, The No2	1900	Walter Gibbons	40ft Firing six inch guns
Isle of Man Boat *Empress Queen* Leaving Liverpool	1900	Warwick	50ft
Japanese Battleship Asahi Ashore off Southsea Beach	1900	Northern Photographic Works	60ft
Ladysmith Naval Brigade at Horse Guards Parade	1900	William Dickson	RN
Ladysmith Naval Brigade at Windsor	1900	William Dickson	RN
Landing 4.7 Naval Gun at Port Elizabeth	1900	Warwick	75ft RN
Landing of the Naval Brigade at Port Elizabeth	1900	Warwick	50ft RN
Man Overboard	1900	Walter Gibbons	65ft
March of the Naval Brigade at Port Elizabeth	1900	Warwick	50ft RN
March Past of Naval Brigade	1900	Warwick	50ft Prince of Wales salutes Marines
Naval Brigade Marching through Main Street, Port Elizabeth	1900	Warwick	50ft RN
Naval Brigade Marching through Windsor	1900	Paul’s Theatrograph	80ft RN
Naval Brigade Pitching Tents	1900	William Dickson	*HMS Terrible* RN
Naval Brigade with Their 4.7 Gun	1900	Philip Wolff	80ft RN
Naval Brigade's March through London	1900	Philip Wolff	120ft RN
Naval Gun	1900	Paul's Theatrograph	60ft RN

Naval Gun Crossing the Vaal	1900	Paul's Theatrograph	50ft RN
Naval Gun Crossing the Vet River Drift	1900	Warwick	100ft RN
Naval Manoeuvres	1900	Warwick	Series 16 films RN
Naval Volunteers in Action	1900	William Dickson	RN
Osprey Guns in Action, The	1900	Warwick	75ft Harbour defence
Panorama of Dover Harbour	1900	James Williamson	50ft
Pet of the Navy No 2 , The	1900	Walter Gibbons	50ft six inch guns firing
Pet of the Navy, The	1900	Walter Gibbons	75ft six inch guns firing
Powerful Naval Brigade, The	1900	Paul's Theatrograph	40ft RN
Reception of Sir George White and *HMS Powerful* Naval Brigade	1900	Warwick	100ft
Return of the Naval Brigade	1900	Paul's Theatrograph	120ft
Review of HMS Powerful Naval Brigade	1900	Warwick	75ft Prince of Wales at Horse Guards Parade
Rough Sea	1900	Cecil Hepworth	100ft Admiralty Pier Dover
Royal Marines, The	1900	Cecil Hepworth	Series of 12 films
Sailors of the Queen	1900	Warwick	100ft Band, RN
Shipwreck, The	1900	Birt Acres	80ft
SS Minneapolis Entering London Docks	1900	William Dickson	Short
SS Salamis Outward Bound	1900	Warwick	50ft
St Tudno at Liverpool Dock, The	1900	Warwick	50ft 4 other similar films of *St Tudno*
Submarine Miners	1900	R. W. Paul	100ft RN
Working a 4.7 Gun	1900	Walter Gibbons	50ft
Wreck in a Gale	1900	Warwick	50ft Jersey
A Transatlantic Trip by *the SS Kronprinz Wilhelm*	1901	Warwick	Series of 26 films
Bluejackets at Cutlass Drill	1901	Warwick	50ft
Bluejackets at Play	1901	Walter Gibbons	RN, *HMS Nortthumberland*,
Building a Lighthouse off Beach Head	1901	Warwick	100ft
Carrying Supplies to Eddystone Lighthouse	1901	Warwick	150ft Steamer
Circular Panorama of Port Said	1901	Warwick	75ft Coaling the Orient Liner *Oruba*

Cruise of The *Ophir*, The	1901	Alfred J. West	Royal Command at Sandringham
Cunard Steamer *Lucania*	**1901**	**Mitchell and Kenyon**	**Liverpool**
Cunard Vessel at Liverpool	**1901**	**Mitchell and Kenyon**	**Liverpool**
Departure of Duke and Duchess of York	1901	Paul's Theatrograph	50ft *HMS Ophir*
Departure of the Duke and Duchess of Cornwall and York for Australia	1901	Joe Rosenthal	Series *HMS Ophir* Departing, King decorating sailors etc
Employees Leaving Alexander Docks	**1901**	**Mitchell and Kenyon**	**Dock workers**
Employees Leaving Vickers and Maxim's	**1901**	**Mitchell and Kenyon**	**Shipyard**
Firing Guns on Board *HMS Repulse*	1901	William Dickson	RN
Fishing Pictures	1901	Warwick	Series of 9 films Trip with steam trawler in Bay of Biscay
Great Strike at Grimsby, The	1901	Cecil Hepworth	75ft March of unemployed fishermen
Gun Drill on Board *HMS Pike*	1901	William Dickson	RN
HMS Goliath in Chinese Waters	1901	Joe Rosenthal	Part of series Uncle Sam's Troops in the Philippines
HMS Victory in Portsmouth Harbour	1901	William Dickson	RN
Incidents from the Battle of Trafalgar	1901	G. A. Smith	50ft Part of Crystal Palace Series
Jack Tar and his Four-Footed Mate Playing Ball	1901	Warwick	50ft Onboard the *HMS Erin*
Life Saving Drill by Bluejackets	1901	Warwick	75ft RN
Naval Brigade Vaulting Horse	1901	Warwick	50ft RN
Naval Demonstrators	1901	G. A. Smith	50ft Part of Crystal Palace Series
Opening of the Army and Navy Exhibit	1901	Warwick	Crystal Palace Sailors climbing mast, RN
Panorama of Battleships Assembled at Spithead	1901	Warwick	100ft
Panorama of Eddystone Lighthouse Rocks	1901	Warwick	50ft
Panorama of the Three Royal Yachts	1901	Warwick	75ft
Passengers Embarking on a Steamer	1901	Warwick	50ft
Portsmouth Navy Yards	1901	Warwick	Series of 3 films

RMS Ophir Leaving Portsmouth	1901	Paul's Theatrograph	50ft Renamed *HMS Ophir* for Royal tour
Shanghai, Hong Kong and Canton	1901	Joe Rosenthal	Series, 2 of 10 films on Royal Navy
Through Manchester Ship Canal on a Torpedo Boat Destroyer	1901	Warwick	150ft RN
Torpedo Boat Destroyers	1901	Warwick	200ft RN Manchester Canal
Washing Decks on Board *HMS Repulse*	1901	William Dickson	RN
Workforce of Scott and Co. Shipyard	**1901**	**Mitchell and Kenyon**	**Shipyard workers**
A Trip to North Wales on the St Elvies	**1902**	**Mitchell and Kenyon**	
Battleship Firing on a Torpedo Boat	1902	Warwick	RN
Bluejackets' Sports	1902	Warwick	Series of 21 films
British Torpedo Destroyer Flotilla Entering Aberdeen Harbour	1902	Warwick	275ft
Coronation Naval Demonstration	**1902**	**R. W. Paul**	**Ships steaming past *HMS Trafalgar***
Distinguished Group Aboard the *SS Carisbrooke Castle*	1902	William Dickson	Short
Dredging for Oysters	1902	Paul's Animatographe	400ft, Whitstable
Fishing in the North Sea	1902	Paul's Animatographe	Series 5 films fishing
Great Coronation Naval Review at Spithead	**1902**	**Gaumont**	**Series of 3 films**
Herring Fishing in the North Sea	1902	Edison	115ft
HMS Terrible's Homecoming	1902	William Dickson	RN
Icelandic Trawler	1902	Warwick	Series of 8 films
Japanese Flagship Asama Saluting the Royal Yacht	1902	William Dickson	English Channel
King Edward Laying the Keel of Battleship *King Edward VII*	1902	Biograph Syndicate	RN
Magnificent Panorama of the Fleet	**1902**	**James Williamson**	**Series of 3 films Coronation Review Spithead, RN**
Naval Brigade at Windsor	1902	Biograph Syndicate	RN
Naval Review	1902	R. W. Paul	King's inspection, RN
Naval Review	**1902**	**William Dickson**	**RN**
North Sea Trawler	1902	Gaumont	Series of 4 films

Return of the *Terrible*	1902	Hepwix	RN
Review Day on *HMS Trafalgar*	1902	R. W. Paul	Sailors eating dinner
Scenes on the Clyde	1902	James Williamson	75ft Shipbuilding Part of a series Scotland
Spithead Naval Review	**1902**	**Warwick**	**Series of 5 films**
The Naval Review: Progress of the Royal Yacht	**1902**	**Cecil Hepworth**	**100ft RN**
The Royal Visit to the City	1902	Warwick	Series, 2 out of 6 films on *HMS Terrible*
Torpedo Destroyers Passing Aberdeen Docks	1902	Warwick	50ft RN
Drill and Play on a Training Ship	1903	H. M. Lomas	250ft, RN
Drill Work and Pastimes of the British Bluejacket	1903	Warwick	*HMS Excellent* crew at Military Tournament
Great Dock Fire at Mill Wall	1903	Paul's Animatographe	130ft
Heavy Sea on South Coast	1903	Urban Trading Company	75ft
HMS Victory in Collision with the *Neptune*	1903	Paul's Animatographe	89ft, RN Porstmouth
Jack Tar at His Daily Exercises	1903	Warwick	Mass Drill Whale Island
Military Tournament, The	1903	Warwick	Series of 3 films all on Navy
Perils of the Deep	1903	Warwick	Series 5 films Shipwreck, Lifeboat, Lighthouse
Rough Sea in the Channel	1903	Warwick	75ft
Training of our Bluejackets	1903	H. M. Lomas	125 ft Sailors drilling, RN
A Day with a North Sea Trawler	1904	Gaumont	250ft Dogger Bank
A Lifeboat Procession	1904	Hepworth	75ft
A Modern Battleship in Action	1904	Sheffield Photo Co	65ft, RN
Attack and Defence of Whale Island, Portsmouth	1904	Alfred J. West	RN
Balkan Fleet of the Russian Navy	1904	Urban	Coaling Suez Canal
Bombardment of Port Arthur	1904	Alfred J. West	Re-enactment by Navy, RN
British Submarines and Their Crews	1904	Warwick	225ft
Crack Atlantic Liner Kaiser Wilhelm III, The	1904	Urban	250ft Arriving Plymouth from New York
Day with a North Sea Trawler	1904	Gaumont	250ft
Disaster to Submarine Boat A.1	1904	Urban	125ft RN

Dragging a 4.7 Gun Up a Cliff	1904	Archibald Brown	100ft RN
Finest Torpedo Film Ever Taken	1904	Warwick	175ft RN
Funeral of the Heroes of Submarine A-1	1904	Hepworth	RN
Funeral of the Victims of the Submarine A-1 Disaster	1904	Urban	100ft RN
German Navy Battleships Manoeuvring at Full Speed	1904	Warwick	Short
How the Russians Coal their Battleships	1904	Warwick	150ft
Japanese Crusier *Misaka* under Full Headway	1904	Alfred J. West	50ft Ship built in Barrow
Japanese Sailors Firing a Six Pounder	1904	Warwick	75ft
Life on Board the Steam Yacht	1904	F. Ormiston-Smith	225ft
Naval Attack on Whale Island, The	1904	Archibald Brown	210ft
Naval Manoeuvres	1904	R. W. Paul	100ft *HMS Trafalgar* and Japanese Ship *Niobe*
New Turbine Torpedo Boat, The	1904	R. W. Paul	90ft RN
North Sea Outrage, The	1904	Hepworth	150ft Crippled trawlers Hull
Rough Sea on the Cornish Coast	1904	Warwick	100ft
Scenes on Board the Channel Turbine Steamer Queen	1904	Urban	75ft
Submarine Boat Skimming Waters at Full Speed	1904	Urban	125ft
Submarine Mine	1904	R. W. Paul	150ft
The Handyman on Land		Mutoscope and Biograph	280ft Sailors Whale Island
The North Sea Outrage	1904	Hepworth	Russian ships shell trawlers
Torpedo Attack at Port Arthur	1904	Warwick	100ft RN
Turbine Steamer *Queen Alexandria*	1904	Urban	50ft Clyde
Victory Repaired, The	1904	Mutoscope and Biograph	50ft RN
Battleships at Full Speed	1905	Gaumont	200ft RN
Battleships in Action	1905	Gaumont	200ft RN
Bluejackets at Play	1905	Will Barker	100ft RN
Boat Makers on Strike	1905	Urban	125ft March on London
British Fleet at Brest, The	1905	Urban	Series of 7 films RN
British Submarines Steaming	1905	Warwick	100ft RN
Cruiser in a Sou'Wester	1905	Gaumont	165ft Ship in a hurricane

England's Welcome to the French Squadron	1905	Hepworth	Series of 3 films Royal Review
French Fleet at Portsmouth, The	1905	Urban	Series of 6 films
HMS King Edward VII, The Largest Battleship Afloat	1905	Will Barker	Series of 3 films RN
Life in a Submarine	1905	Warwick	280ft RN
Nelson Centenary, The	**1905**	**Walturdaw**	**RN**
Our Ice Supply	1905	I. Roseman	Ice shipped from Norway to England
Panoramic View of Channel Fleet	1905	Will Barker	RN
Popular Incidents in the Life of Lord Nelson	**1905**	**Gaumont**	**820ft Biography Nelson**
Rough Sea on the Derry Coast	1905	Warwick	75ft
Russian Fleet on Way to the Far East	1905	Urban	275ft
Scene at the London Docks	1905	Gaumont	300ft
South America	1905	Urban	Series, 8 of 22 films on RN or merchant shipping
Trafalgar Square on Nelson Centenary Day	1905	Urban	125ft RN
Voyage to New York on *Kaiser Wilhelm II*	1905	Urban	Series of 6 films
Voyage to South America	1905	Urban	600ft Royal Mail Packet
With the Fleet	1905	Gaumont	690ft RN
Abandoned *Montagu*, The	1906	Urban	200ft Severe Gale
Atlantic Voyage, The	1906	Urban	540ft *SS Kaiser Wilhelm II*
Atlantic Whaling	1906	Urban	450ft
British Bluejackets: Flagship firing a Salute	1906	Urban	RN
England's Naval Nursery	1906	Walturdaw	600ft Life on a training ship, RN
Fishing Industry, The	1906	Hepworth	375ft Fishing haddock
Fisticuffs on a Battleship	1906	Urban	Boxing, RN
Herring Harvest, The	1906	Cricks & Sharp	395ft Scotland
HMS Montagu on the Rocks at Lundy	1906	Warwick	200ft Severe Gale RN
Lifeboat Drill on an Atlantic Liner	1906	Urban	190ft
Sardine Industry, The	1906	Warwick	600ft
Scotch Herring Industry, The	1906	Urban	500ft
Target Practice in the British Navy	1906	Urban	*HMS Garnet*, RN
Theatricals Aboard *HMS Nile*	1906	Urban	200ft Sailors dressed as Neptune and Britannia
Attack on Whale Island	1907	Will Barker	RN
Dreadnought, The	1907	Walturdaw	150ft RN

Grave of a Warship	1907	Urban	485ft *HMS Montagu* Lundy Island
King and the *Dreadnought*, The	1907	Urban	500ft King Edward's cruise on the *Dreadnought*, RN
Life on a Battleship	1907	Gaumont	640ft, *HMS Swiftsure*, RN
Lusitania at Liverpool, The	1907	Walturdaw	200ft Atlantic race between *Lusitania* and *Lucania*
Lusitania, The	1907	Will Barker	530ft
Naval Attack on Portsmouth	1907	Urban	800ft Whale Island, RN
Naval Review at Portsmouth	1907	Will Barker	RN
On Board the *Mauretania*	1907	Walturdaw	410ft Liverpool to Queenstown
Oyster Industry, The	1907	Cricks & Sharp	245ft Whitstable
Panorama of the Fleet	1907	Walturdaw	300ft Naval manoeuvres RN
Premiers' Reception on and Inspection of *HMS Dreadnought*	1907	Urban	255ft
Royal Naval Review	1907	Will Barker	Series of 2 films, RN
Royal Review of the Home Fleet	1907	Urban	300ft King and Queen at Cowes, RN
SS Mauretania's Steam Trial Trip	1907	Urban	100ft Tyne
Swedish Drill in the Navy at Whale Island	1907	Urban	753ft RN Training
Testing of a Lifeboat	1907	Cricks & Sharp	200ft
The Handy Man at Play	1907	Urban	290ft also called The Naval Nursery, RN
Torpedo Attack on *HMS Dreadnought*	**1907**	**Urban**	**467ft, RN**
Towing the Bow of *SS Suevic*	1907	Urban	480ft *Belfast* tugs half a steamship, RN
Work of Trinity House, The No1	1907	Cricks & Sharp	470ft Relieving light ships
Wreck of the *SS Berlin*	1907	Warwick	350ft
Adriatic Leaving Southampton	1908	Urban	450ft
Britain's Latest Warships	1908	Alfred J. West	250ft *Dominion, Dreadnought, Agamemnon, Indomitble*
Life on the Ocean Wave	1908	Alfred J. West	560ft Daily life of sailor
Lobster Fishing	1908	R. W. Paul	212ft Coracle fishing Ireland
Mauretania's First Voyage, The	1908	R. W. Paul	410ft

Navy and Army Boxing Championship	1908	Safety Bioscope	600ft, RN
Off to America	1908	Urban	Series of 2 films *Adriatic* Southampton to New York
Ramming of the *Gladiator*	1908	Warwick	300ft
Review of the British Navy	1908	G. A. Smith	335ft Southend and Spithead, RN
Salving of *HMS Gladiator*	1908	Urban	450ft, Yarmouth, RN
Submarines in Portsmouth Harbour	1908	Hepworth	200ft
Under the Sea by Submarine Boat	1908	Urban	485ft, RN
Whaling off the Irish Coast	1908	R. W. Paul	750ft
Work of Trinity House, The No3	1908	A. E. Coleby	300ft Maintaining buoys at sea
Wounded *Gladiator*, The	1908	Alfred J. West	165ft salvage operations, RN
Wreck of *HMS Gladiator*	1908	Walturdaw	265ft, RN
Wreck of *HMS Gladiator*	1908	Gaumont	225ft
Wreck of the *Amazon*	1908	R. W. Paul	South Wales
A Day with the British Bluejacket	1909	Urban	RN
A Day with the Kings Navee	1909	Urban	RN
A Scotch Drifter Ashore	1909	Walturdaw	130ft Shipwreck Yarmouth
A Trip to the White Sea Fisheries	1909	Joe Rosenthal	Trawler in the North Sea
American Passengers Per *SS Cedric*	1909	G. A. Smith	840ft Steamer arrives at Holyhead
Army and Navy Boxing Contest	1909	Safety Bioscope	600ft, RN
Arrival of the *Mauretania* at Fishguard	1909	Kineto	585ft
Bluejackets in London	1909	John Y. Brown	220ft, RN
Bluejackets March to Guildhall	1909	Urban	RN
Bluejackets March to the Guildhall	1909	Kineto	605ft
Bremen to New York by the Liner *George Washington*	1909	Urban	750ft
British Naval Pageant, The	1909	John Y. Brown	570ft Home Fleet in London
Deep Sea Oyster Fishing	1909	Kineto	630ft Fishing Packing
Dreadnought to the Rescue	1909	Rosie Film Company	Unknown RN
Flower of Our Navy on the Thames, The	1909	Will Barker	220ft Westminster to Southend Home Fleet, RN
From the Fighting Top of a Battleship in Action	1909	Will Barker	385ft, RN

Great Naval Pageant on the Thames	1909	Urban	RN
Herring Harvest at Lowestoft, The	1909	Walturdaw	415ft
Laying the Keel of the White Star Liner *Olympic*	1909	Urban	155ft Belfast
Life in the British Navy	1909	Urban	755ft
Making of a Sailor, The	1909	Frank Butcher	370ft Boys training
March of the Bluejackets to Guildhall	1909	Will Barker	200ft, RN
Mimic Battle on Whale Island	1909	Urban	600ft Naval Exercises, RN
Naval Review at Spithead	1909	Urban	300ft, RN
Review of the British Navy at Southend End and Spithead: Lowering Nets and Approach of Submarine	1909	G.A. Smith	RN
Review of the Fleet in the Solent	1909	Urban	RN
Scenes on the *Dreadnought*	1909	Will Barker	200ft Lord Mayor at Southend
Shark Fishing in the North Sea	1909	Tyler	380ft
Spithead Review, The	1909	Will Barker	500ft RN
Thames Naval Pageant	1909	Kineto	690ft RN
Thames Naval Pageant, The	1909	Hepworth	400ft, RN
Torpedo Attack on the Dreadnought	1909	Walturdaw	410ft, RN
Torpedo Boat in a Rough Sea	1909	Walturdaw	200ft RN
Trip to South Africa on *SS Walmer Castle*	1909	London Cinematograph Co.	860ft
Visit of the Lords of the Admiralty to *HMS Dreadnought*	1909	G. A. Smith	RN
Cedric at Holyhead, The	1910	Kineto	590ft Building a liner
Herring Harvest at Yarmouth, The	1910	Will Barker	500ft
Liverpool	1910	Frank Butcher	280ft Visit to the Port
London's Fish Supply	1910	Joe Rosenthal	430ft North Sea Trawler
Naval Competitions		Kineto	485ft Sailors crew heavy guns, RN
Portsmouth to Ryde, Isle of Wight	1910	G. A. Smith	620ft Naval Manoeuvres, RN
Royal Naval and Marine Tournament	1910	Kineto	350ft Boys Brigade and Royal Naval Cadet
Submarine and Torpedo Destroyers	1910	G. A. Smith	630ft RN
Trial Trip of the *Yarra,* The	1910		169ft Australian warship trials in the River Clyde

A Day with Jack Tar	1911	Urban	480ft
A Dreadnought in the Making	**1911**	**Sheffield Photo Co**	**755ft Shipbuilding Vickers**
Arrival of the Kenilworth Castle	1911	John Y. Brown	105ft Ship docks
Arrival of the Kenilworth Castle at Table Bay	1911	Cooperative	105ft Liner South Africa
Cornish Mackerel Fishing	1911	Tyler	560ft Fishing Newlyn
Coronation Naval Review at Sptithead	1911	Kineto	300ft Films of same title made by 4 other companies, RN
Fishing in the English Channel	1911	Tyler	396ft
From Malta to Gibraltar	1911	Hepworth	300ft Voyage in the Mediterranean
Gun Practice on a Dreadnought	1911	Kineto	450ft RN
HMS Torpedo Boat Destroyer Viper	1911	Biograph Syndicte	RN
Leviathan of the Deep: *SS Olympic*	1911	G. A. Smith	425ft Southampton
Life in the Merchant Service	1911	Joe Rosenthal	460ft Steamer Bay of Biscay
Making of a Handy Man	1911	Hepworth	425ft Sailors on a battleship, RN
Malta, Britain's Mediterranean Stronghold	1911	Joe Rosenthal	315ft British Fleet at Malta
Native Oyster Fishing	1911	Kineto	375ft
Naval Cross Country Championship, The	1911	Warwick	RN
On a Torpedo Boat in the North Sea	1911	Urban	295ft RN
Preparing the *Aurora* for Mawson's Expedition to the South Pole	1911	Kineto	350ft Departure from Cardiff
Regatta Day at Malta	1911	Kineto	325ft Given in honour of Home Fleet, RN
RMS Olympic The Largest Ship in the World	1911	Kineto	240ft Tour of the 'Atlantic Greyhound'
Royal Naval Sports at Malta	1911	Kineto	450ft RN
Royal Navy and Military Tournament	1911	Warwick	450ft RN
Scenes in and around Plymouth	1911	Tyler	555ft Eddystone Lighthouse
Under the Union Jack	1911	J.B. McDowell	695ft Boys training *HMS Exmouth*
With Captain Scott RN to the South Pole (1st edition)	**1911**	**Herbert G. Ponting**	**British Antarctic Expedition**

A Day with the Yarmouth Herring Fishers	1912	Gaumont	540ft
Battleship and Submarine Manoeuvres	1912	Kineto	370ft RN
Boys of the Bulldog Breed	1912	Urban	538ft Sailors at Work
Deep Sea Fisheries	1912	Universal Pictures	750ft Fishing Hull
Funeral of the *Titanic's* Heroic Musical Conductor	1912	Andrews	250ft Musician Wallace Hartley, Colne
Handy Man at Gun Exercise	1912	Kineto	460ft , RN
Herring Fishery at Loch Fine	1912	B & C	695ft
Historic Hastings and the Gates of England	1912	W. H. Speer	560ft HMS Victory at Portsmouth
Jack Tar Amuses His Friends	1912	Kineto	355ft Sailors boxing blindfold
Mackerel Fishing	1912	Cosmopolitan Films	425ft
Naval and Military Tournament	1912	Urban	460ft
Opening of Immingham Dock by the HM King	1912	Urban	Grimsby
Royal Naval and Military Tournament	1912	Jury	Olympia, RN
Sentinels of the Deep	1912	Will Barker	582ft Sailors at Work
Trawling at the Dogger Bank	1912	Cosmopolitan Films	360ft
Under the White Ensign	1912	Cosmopolitan Films	445ft Training ship, RN
With Captain Scott RN to the South Pole (Second Series)	**1912**	**Herbert G. Ponting**	**British Antarctic Expedition**
Britain's Hope	1913	Andrew Heron	478ft Naval Cadets
Ceramic, The	1913	Kineto	Belfast to Liverpool in new White Star Liner
Crossing the Line	1913	Kineto	370ft Ceremony crossing equator
Crossing the North Sea	1913	Kineto	Short
Fun on the *Nestor*	1913	Kineto	350ft
Herring Fishery	1913	Natural History & General	297ft
Life on the Ocean Wave	1913	B & C	556ft Ship mid-Atlantic
Oyster Fishery at Whitstable	1913	J. B. McDowell	600ft
Aquitania's Maiden Voyage	1914	Kineto	Short
Britain's Bid for Supremacy	1914	Gaumont	485ft Navy and Army, RN
British Bulldogs at Gun Drill	1914	Motograph	412ft
Construction of a Lifeboat, The	1914	Andrew Heron	564ft

England's Glory	1914	Walturdaw	*HMS Birmingham*, RN
Great Nations' Defenders of the Seas, The	1914	Will Barker	Allied Navies, RN
Herring Fishing in the North Sea	1914	Gaumont	625ft
HMS Worcester	1914	Gaumont	385ft RN training merchant marine
Jack Tar Ashore and Afloat	1914	Kineto	555ft Torpedoes Submarines
Life in the British Navy	1914	Colorfilms Ltd.	1380ft, RN
Life in the Merchant Service	1914	Urban	400ft
Life on Board *HMS Cumberland*	1914	Prieur	350ft Training, RN
Naval Review 1914, The	1914	Will Barker	285ft King visits Spithead, RN
Our Sailors at Play	1914	Urban	325ft
Our Sailors at Work	1914	Urban	350ft
Royal Naval and Military Tournament	1914	Jury	RN
Sailors Training for Shore Duty	1914	Urban	340ft, RN
Scenes in the North Sea	1914	Clarendon	180ft Movements of the Fleet, RN
Sons of the Sea	1914	Walker	500ft Sailors at work
Sons of the Sea	1914	Pathe	485ft Haswell Nautical School
Whaling off the North Coast of Scotland	1914	Urban	390ft
What our Naval Brigade Can Do	1914	Urban	Manoeuvres
A Trip Up the Clyde	1915	Kineto	460ft Building Warships
After Big Game of the Sea	1915	Sterling	350ft Deep sea fishing
An Ocean Liner from Cradle to Grave	1915	Colorfilms Ltd.	1840ft
Fishing for Mines in the North Sea	1915	Eclair	466ft RN
Fishing Net Industry, The	1915	Harry Furniss	410ft Hastings
Floating Peril, The	1915	Kineto	325ft Making and laying mines
Folkestone's Fishing Boats	1915	Wardour	310ft
Handyman of the Future	1915	Pathe	450ft Training ship *Mercury,* RN
In the Mine-Strewn North Sea	1915	Yorkshire	799ft Fishing trawlers
Jack Tar as an Athlete	1915	Kineto	445ft Sailors training
Kiel Canal and German Shipping	1915	Colorfilms Ltd.	1275ft
Our Naval Forces in Training	1915	Eclair	380ft

Royal Naval Division at Work and at Play	1915	Neptune	1100ft Training at Crystal Palace
Royal Naval Division in Training, The	1915	Neptune	430ft Lord Tredegar's men at Crystal Palace
Sailors Gun Drill Ashore	1915	Urban	365ft Sailors training
Sons of the Sea	1915	Palmer	1100ft
Von Tirpitz's Hiding Place	1915	Kineto	305ft German Navy at Kiel
With the Allied Fleets in the Dardanelles	1915	Gaumont	550ft British and French Fleets
A Voyage to the Tropics	1916	Kineto	570ft Steamer London to Jamaica
Birth of a Standard Ship, The	1916	Admiralty	Official Film, RN
British Submarines in the Mediterranean	1916	Admiralty	430ft Official Film, RN
Great Navies of the World	1916	Alfred J. West	Series 2 films
Making of a Sailor, The	1916	Davison	397ft
Our Navy: New Series	1916	Alfred J. West	4000ft
Fishing Industry, The	1917	Davison	502ft Trawlers
His Majesty's Visit to His Grand Fleet	1917	War Office	1800ft Official Film, RN
Movements of Japanese Warships in the Mediterranean	1917	War Office	900ft Official Film
Our Brave Merchant Service	1917	Kineto	520ft
Our Naval Air Power	1917	War Office	2000ft, Official Film, RN
Our Naval Squadron in the Mediterranean	1917	War Office	450ft, Official Film, RN
Our Naval Work	1917	FBO	750ft King visits Fleet
Sons of Our Empire	1917	War Office	Series 3 films 1 on Navy, Official Film, RN
Story of the Drifters and of the Sea Dogs Who Man Them, The	1917	Admiralty	Official Film
Thames Nautical Training College, *HMS Worcester*	1917	Kineto	490ft RN
US Destroyers in British Waters	1917	Admiralty	Official Film
A Day on a Mine Sweeper	1918	Admiralty	1100ft
America is Here	1918	Admiralty	1100ft First Sea Lord visits US Naval Base in Ireland, Official Film, RN
Hands Across the Sea	1918	Admiralty	1100ft Arrival of American Battleships, Official Film
It is For Liberty	1918	Admiralty	Probably American ships, Official Film
Patient Heroes of the Sea	1918	Admiralty	1100ft Royal Visit to Harwich, Official Film

Rule Britannia	1918	Admiralty	5000ft Life in Grand Fleet Reissued 1920, Official Film
Story of *HMS Vindictive* at Ostend	1918	Admiralty	1500ft Official Film
Submarine Service, The	1918	Admiralty	Official Film, RN
Surrender of the German Fleet	1918	Gaumont	2132ft
Surrender of the U-Boats	1918	Gaumont	341ft
British Navy in Belgium, The	1919	John D. Tippet	RN
Our Britain	**c1919**	**Pathe**	**Montage of British institutions including the Fleet**
South, Sir Ernest Shackleton's Glorious Epic of the Antarctic	1919	Frank Hurley	4500ft, reissued 1933 as *Endurance, The Story of a Glorious Favour*
Triumph of Britain's Sea Power: Surrender of the German Fleet	1919	Admiralty	2000ft Official Film, RN
Victory Leaders, The	1919	Maurice Elvey	1757ft Including Admirals Jellicoe and Beatty
Victory Naval Review	1919	Walturdaw	1500ft King Reviews Fleet at Southend
50,000 Miles with the Prince of Wales	1920	Will Baker	Prince of Wales tour aboard battlecrusier Renown
Jack the Handy Man	1920	E.G. Tong	2000ft Training HMS Impregnable
North of the Dogger Bank	1920	Arthur Jones	Fishing fleet North Sea
Battle of Jutland, The	**1921**	**H. Bruce Woolfe**	**1916, WW1**
Scrap the Battleships	1921	Topical Budget	RN TB535-1
Secrets of Submarine Hunting	1921	Admiralty	Official Film Submarine WW1
Cruise of *Princess Maquinna*	1922	Gaumont	100ft
Sailorman	1923	Cinema International Corporation	
Southward on the Quest	1923	MP	RN 4600ft 1919 film with added sound
Trail of the Trawler, The	1923	General	1000ft Fishing
Romance of HMS Victory, The	**1923**	**F. W. Engholm**	**2000ft Nelson**
Great White Silence, The	**1924**	**Herbert G. Ponting**	**7086ft Captain Scott Revised material**
Southampton	1924	Artistic	1000ft Survey of the port
Zeebrugge	**1924**	**A. V. Bramble**	**7000ft RN WW1**
Whale Hunting in the South Seas	1924	Lever	2000ft

Dangerous Waters	1924	Unknown	Prince of Wales appeal on behalf of Empire Sailors
Britain's Birthright	1925	H. Bruce Woolfe	6500ft Empire tour of the Special Service Squadron
Heroes of the North Sea	1925	A. E. Jones	1611ft North Sea Fishing Fleets
Cruise of *HMS Hood* and *Repulse*	1926	H. Bruce Woolfe	Life on board warships
Life on the Ocean Wave	1926	H. Bruce Woolfe	5000ft Life in Navy (some footage from Britain's Birthright)
Tragedy of the *Hampshire*, The	1926	A. C. Tinsdale	3000ft Lord Kitchener
Under Sail in the Frozen North	1926	Gaumont	2109ft British Arctic Expedition
The Battles of Coronel and the Falkland Islands	**1927**	**Walter Summers**	**8100ft WW1**
An Ocean Highway	1928	Direct	800ft Pilots in the Channel
Naval Warfare in Nelson's Time	**1928**	**H. Bruce Woolfe**	**Nelson (uses some footage from 1926 feature on Nelson)**
Sentinels of the Deep	1928	Direct	800ft Lighthouse
Ships of all Ages	1928	Christie Lecture Agency	2000ft Historic survey
Signposts of the Sea	1928	Direct	800ft Buoy Beacons
Drifters (Our Herring Industry)	**1929**	**John Grierson**	**Fishing Lowestoft**
The Royal Navy Ashore and Afloat: The Submarines	1929	F. W. Engholm	Series of 8 films
With the Fleet at Sea	1929	British Talking Pictures	Visit to RN Vessel
Heroes of the Sea	1930	British International Pictures	Lifeboats
Port of London	**1930**	**John Grierson**	**Unfinished**
Sailor's Hornpipe	1930	Pathe	Sports Aircraft Carrier Crew
Tell England	**1931**	**British Instructional Films**	**Gallipoli, WW1**
Britannia Rules the Waves	1932	Wardour	Historic Days of the Windjammers
Deeds Men Do, The	1932	R. E. Jeffrey	Sound version of Battles of Coronel & Falklands 1927
Midgets of the Sea	1932	Equity British	Fishing

Shrimp Fishers of Gravesend, The	1932	Jonas & Brown	Fishing 793ft part of series 'Betwixt Land and Sea'
90° South	**1933**	**Herbert Ponting**	**Edition of Ponting's 1911 Scott film**
Cable Ship	**1933**	**GPO Film Unit**	**Repair of telephone cable in the Channel**
Cargo from Jamaica	1933	John Grierson EMB	Merchant
Liner Cruising South	**1933**	**John Grierson**	**Cruise Liner to Caribbean**
Symphony of the Sea	1933	H. Bruce Woolfe	Sea and sailor's life
Uncharted Waters	1933	Edgar Anstey	Admiralty Challenger Expedition along Labrador Coast
Dave at Sea	1934	Unknown	Scotland
Granton Trawler	**1934**	**John Grierson**	**Trawling Norwegian Coast**
Man of Aran	1934	Robert J. Flaherty	Fishing
Rising Tide, The	**1934**	**Paul Rotha**	**Building Southampton Docks**
Ship, The	**1934**	**Paul Rotha**	**Impressionistic view dockyard town**
Turning Her Round	1934	John Gifford	GPO White Star Liner *Majestic* at Southampton
British Shipbuilding Revival	1935	British Movietone News	Shipbuilding expansion
Face of Britain: Great Cargoes	**1935**	**Paul Rotha**	**Dockyards Southampton, part of a series of films**
People and Places	1935	Alexander Shaw	886ft Cruise aboard a liner
Sea Change	1935	Alexander Shaw	Orient Line, Cruiser *Orontes*
Shipyard	**1935**	**Paul Rotha**	**Shipbuilding Barrow-in-Furness**
A Cornish Idyll	1936	Kingdon-Ward	Landscapes and Fishing villages Cornwall
Dry Dock	1936	Stanley Hawes	Building of Southampton Docks
Heavy Industries	**1936**	**John Elder**	**Building the *Queen Mary***
Land They Knew, The	1936	Alba	Historic Series 2 films Nelson and Queen Elizabeth
Men Against the Sea	1936	Vernon Sewell	Trawler Fleet North Sea
Ship Shape	1936	Fidelity	Day aboard an Atlantic liner

The Way to the Sea	**1936**	**J. B. Holmes**	**Transport infrastructure**
Wonder Ship	**1936**	**GB Instructional**	**Queen Mary's maiden voyage**
A Voyage of Discovery	1937	GB Instructional	Royal Research ship rescues crashed polar airmen
Danger at Sea	1937	Philip Leacock	
Farewell Topsails	1937	Humphrey Jennings	Last of the windjammers
Letters to Liners	1937	GPO	Ship's mail while at sea
Naval Occasions	1937	John Hunt	Maiden voyage of *HMS Aberdeen* to the Mediterranean
Our Heritage The Sea	1937		Merchant Britain's dependence on the sea
Our Island Nation	1937	J. L. F. Hunt	Life in the Royal Navy
Red Sails	1937	Ronald Haines	Life of a Cornish fisherman
Royal Naval Review at Spithead	1937	Pathe	George VI reviews fleet
North Sea	1938	Harry Watt /John Grierson	Fishing, MoI
On the Fishing Banks of Skye	**1938**	**John Grierson**	**GPO Hake fishing Scotland**
Saving of Bill Blewitt, The	**1937**	**GPO**	**National Savings Fishermen Cornwall**
Sea Food	1938	Pathe	Fishing Scotland
Sea Lights	1938	John Eldridge	Lighthouses
Berth of a Queen	1939	Ronald Haines	1709ft Shipbuilding Queen Elizabeth
Britain Expects	1939	Alan Lawson	Blockade runner Captain Jones
British Navy, The	1939	Stuart Legg	1446ft Manoeuvres in Malta
Cavalcade of the Navy	1939	Horace Shepherd	4840ft History Navy through paintings
Crews Courageous	1939	Jack Rutherford	1007ft North Sea Herring Fishing
Gibraltar: The First Outpost	1939	C.B. Blacker	1614ft Mediterranean Fleet
Navy at Work, The	1939	TIDA	1391ft Mediterranean Fleet exercises, Official Film
Net Results	1939	Technique	974ft Herring Fishing
River Clyde, The	1939	John Elder	Shipbuilding
Rule Britannia	1939	Hunt	478ft Recruitment
Sea Harvest	1939	Harry Rose	1662ft Lowestoft Herring Fishing
SS Ionian	1939	GPO	Last voyage of a cargo ship

Voyage of the *Ashanti*, The	1939	Hunt	1055ft New destroyer visits Gibraltar
Youth at the Helm	1939	Navy League	1241ft Naval cadets training
City of Ships	1940	J. B. Holmes	Merchant London Docks Port of London Authority
Fishermen of Britain	1940	Conway	1282ft Fishing
Mastery of the Sea	1940	Alberto Cavalcanti	Convoy system
Navy is Here, The	1940	Horace Shepherd	6817ft RN
Sailors Courageous	1940	Ronald Haines	Fishing
Somewhere at Sea	1940	Ronald Haines	Destroyer
Tradition		Victor Sheridan	1850ft Naval cadets
Unconquerable Minesweepers	1940	John Rutherford	1533ft RN
Call of the Sea	1941	Piccadilly	Poetry and music
H.M Navies Go to Sea	1941	Gerald Sanger	RN
Sea Legs	1941	Ronald Haines	Cadets training RN
Ships of the Sea	1942	Paul Barralet	Merchant survey
Who'll Buy a Warship	1942	Richard Massingham	RN
Homeward Bound	1944	Eugene Cekalski	
Sailor's Do Care	1944	Lewis Gilbert	
Home from the Sea	1946	National Savings	
Men from the Sea	1946	Gilbert Gunn	Sea rescues
A Fisherman’s Yarn	1947	J. B. Holmes	Lifeboat
Old Sailor’s Story	1947	Hayford Hobbs	Lifeboat
Radar Goes to Sea	1947	Metropolitan Vickers	
Skiffy Goes to Sea	1947	Harry May	Merchant Thames waterman goes to sea
Heritage of the Sea	1948	Paul Barralet	RN/ Merchant
A Sailor of the Sea	1949	Jim Mellor	RN Recruitment
Berth 24	1950	British Transport Film Unit	Hull Docks
Ocean Terminal	1952	British Transport Film Unit	Hull Docks
Spotlight on the Flying Sailors	1952	William Pollard	RN Fleet Air Arm
Sea Fever	1955	Paul Barralet	Merchant Cadets
Gale Warning	1956	Frank Green	Lifeboat

The Sea Shall Test Her	1956	British Iron and Steel Corportion	Shipbuilding
Weekend Sailors	1959	Rank	Pleasure Yachts
Submarine	1960	Rank	RN
They Chose the Sea	1960	British Petroleum	Merchant Tankers
Seawards the Great Ships	**1960**	**Hilary Harris**	**Clyde shipbuilding**

Table 4 Appendix Three: Ship Launches on Film 1897- 1969

This table is compiled from the BFI Film and Television Database (http://www.bfi.org.uk/filmtvinfo/ftvdb/) The Complete Index to World Film, the Imperial War Museum Film Catalogue (www.iwmcollections.org.uk/qryFilm.php) Gaumont British News and Gaumont Graphic from Newsfilm Online (www.nfo.ac.uk) and British Pathe online (www.britishpathe.com).

There were almost certainly more films of launches made by newsreel companies for whom it has not been possible to find a complete listing of their films. This table gives the name of the ship being launched, where known, and not necessarily the name of the reel. It indicates where more than one company filmed the launch and it is likely that this was the case for more launches than it has been possible to ascertain.

Ship Name and Place of Launch	**Company**	**Year**
HMS Canopus, Portsmouth	Chard's Vitagraph	1897
Braemar Castle, liner, Glasgow	Paul's Theatrograph	1898
HMS Albion, Blackwall	Paul's Animatograph Works Philipp Wolff Northern Photographic Works Prestwich Interchangeable Ltd	1898
HMS Formidable, Portsmouth	Mutoscope and Biograph	1898
Skylark	Warwick	1898
Worthing Lifeboat	British Mutoscope and Biograph Comapny	1898
HMS Vengeance, pre-dreadnought, Barrow-in-Furness	Biograph Syndicate	1899
Lifeboat, Porthonstock	Biograph Syndicate	1899
RMS Oceanic, liner, Belfast	Warwick	1899
Shamrock, Yacht, London	G.A. Smith	1899
Brighton, Lifeboat	Warwick	1900
S.S. Salamis	Warwick	1900
Celtic, Liner, Belfast	Warwick Trading Company Williamson	1901
Shamrock II	Warwick Biograph Syndicate	1901
HMS Leviathan, cruiser, Clydebank	Biograph Syndicate	1901
HMS Queen, battleship, Devonport	Hepworth Warwick	1902
HMS Dominion, Barrow-in-Furness	Mitchell & Kenyon	1903
HMS Edward VII, pre-Dreadnought, Devonport	Hepworth	1903
Launch of the largest battleship	Clarendon	1903
Lifeboat, Folkestone	Charles Urban	1903
Shamrock III, Dumbarton	Unknown	1903
Lifeboat, Filey	Charles Urban	1904

Lifeboat, Newquay	Gaumont	1904
Mikasa, Japanese Battleship, Barrow-in-Furness	Hepworth	1904
Katori, Japanese Battleship, Barrow-in-Furness	R. W. Paul Gaumont Hepworth	1905
Lifeboat, Newquay	Gaumont	1905
HMS Dreadnought, Portsmouth	Hepworth Charles Urban	1906
Launch of a new Type of Cruiser	Charles Urban	1906
RMS Lusitania, Clydebank	Warwick	1906
SS Empress of Ireland	Charles Urban	1906
HMS Bellerophon, Portsmouth	Charles Urban	1907
Minas Geraes, Brazilian Battleship, Newcastle	Cricks & Sharp	1907
HMS Vincent	Charles Urban	1908
HMS Colossus, Greenock	Walturdaw	1910
HMS Orion	Warwick Trading Company Kineto	1910
Launch of a Motor Barge	British Pathe	1910
Olympic, liner, Belfast	G.A. Smith Kineto	1910
HMS Dartmouth	Warwick	1911
HMS George V, dreadnought, Portsmouth	Warwick	1911
HMS Princess Royal, Barrow-in-Furness	Barker Motion Photography	1911
HMS Thunderer	Warwick Trading Company Gaumont Graphic Urban Barker B & C Cooperative	1911
Princess Alice, Barrow-in-Furness	Sheffield Photo Co,	1911
HMS Marlborough, Devonport	Pathe	1912
HMS Nottingham, Pembroke	Warwick Trading Company	1912
Andania, liner, Greenock	British Pathe	1913
HMS Emperor of India, Barrow-in-Furness	Warwick Trading Company	1913
HMS Lowestoft, Chatham	Topical Film Company	1913
HMS Warspite, Devonport	Warwick Trading Company	1913
SS Imperator	Charles Urban	1913
***Aquitania*, Cunard liner**	**Gaumont**	**1914**
Launch of a concrete boat	British Pathe	1914
Concrete ship	Gaumont Graphic	1918
Crepath, Barnstaple	Unknown	1918
SS War Forest, Chepstow	GB	1918
Concrete oil tanker steamer, Poole	Gaumont Graphic	1919
Cameronia, liner, Clyde	Gaumont Graphic	1920
Dorsetshire, Bibby liner, Belfast	Gaumont Graphic	1920

Empress of Canada, Govan	British Pathe	1920
HMS Wren, destroyer, Yarrow	Gaumont Graphic	1920
Lifeboat, Blackpool	British Pathe	1920
Mendoya, cargo vessel	British Pathe	1920
Midnight Launch of a merchant vessel	British Pathe	1920
Princess Elizabeth, Govan	British Pathe	1920
RMS Samaria, liner, Merseyside	British Pathe	1920
The War Glory, Gwent	British Pathe	1920
Ausonia, liner, Newcastle	Gaumont Graphic	1921
Graigavon, steel screw steamer, Dublin	Gaumont Graphic	1921
HMS Effingham, Portsmouth	Topical Film Company	1921
SS Brymore, Dublin	British Pathe	1921
SS Moygannon, Dublin	British Pathe	1921
Windsor Castle, liner, Glasgow	Gaumont Graphic	1921
Diogenes, Belfast	Gaumont Graphic	1922
Lifeboat, Appledore	British Pathe	1922
Lifeboat, Lizard	British Pathe	1922
RMS Franconia, liner, Clydebank	British Pathe	1922
Malines, railway steamer, Tyne	British Pathe	1924
Oronsay, liner, Clydebank	Gaumont Graphic	1924
Grace Darling, Lifeboat, Lindisfarne	Gaumont Graphic Pathe	1925
HMS Rodney, Birkenhead	British Pathe	1925
RMS Carinthia, liner, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1925
Andalusia, Blue Star liner	Topical Film Company Gaumont Graphic	1926 1926
HMS Amazon, Southampton	British Pathe	1926
HMS Berwick, cruiser, Govan	British Pathe	1926
HMS Cornwall, Devonport	Topical Film Comapny Gaumont Graphic	1926 1926
HMS Kent, Chatham	Topical Film Company	1926
King George V, steamer, Dumbarton	Topical Film Company Gaumont Graphic	1926
The Southland, Dublin	British Pathe	1926
Arandora, liner, Merseyside	Topical Film Company Pathe Gaumont Graphic	1927 1927 1927
Duke of Lancaster, steamer, Dumbarton	Topical Film Company (Glasgow Edition)	1927
Jalabala, steamer, Glasgow	British Pathe	1927
Jalaveer, steamer, Glasgow	British Pathe	1927
Lifeboat, Bangor	Gaumont Graphic	1927
Maui Pomaro, Dublin	British Pathe	1927
SS Laurentic, liner, Belfast	Gaumont Graphic	1927
SS R.H Carr, Saltney	British Pathe	1927
SS Tilapa, Merseyside	Gaumont Graphic	1927
Duchess of Bedford, liner, Glasgow	British Pathe	1928
Duchess of York, Clydebank	Topical Film Company	1928
HMS Medway, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1928

HMS Norfolk, Govan	British Pathe	1928
HMS Resource, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1928
HMS Shropshire	Topical Film Company	1928
HMS York, cruiser, Yarrow	Gaumont Graphic	1928
Lifeboat, Portrush	Gaumont Graphic	1928
SS Isola, Dublin	British Pathe	1928
2 Submarines (Chilean), Barrow-in-Furness	Gaumont Graphic	1929
HMS Arrow, destroyer, Barrow-in-Furness	Gaumont Graphic	1929
HMS Dorsetshire, Portsmouth	British Pathe	1929
HMS Exeter, cruiser, Devonport	British Pathe Gaumont British News	1929 1929
HMS Orpheus, submarine, Clydeside	British Pathe	1929
HMS Poseidon, submarine, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1929
Lady Cooper's yacht, Tyne	British Pathe	1929
Lifeboat, Cowes	Gaumont Graphic	1929
Peverill, Liverpool	Gaumont Graphic	1929
RMS Orontes, liner, Barrow-in-Furness	Unknown	1929
Ulster Prince, Belfast	Gaumont Graphic	1929
HMS Scarborough, Wallsend	Topical Film Company	1930
Massey Shaw, fire boat, London	British Pathe	1930
Lauching a Carrier and Submarine, Clyde	British Pathe	1930
Empress of Japan, liner, Glasgow	British Pathe	1930
HMS Bulldog, Tyne	British Pathe	1930
HMS Hastings, Devonport	British Pathe	1930
HMS Penzance, Devonport	British Pathe	1930
HMS Rainbow, submarine, Chatham	Gaumont Graphic	1930
Innisfallen, motor vessel, Belfast	Gaumont Graphic	1930
Lifeboat, Dover	British Pathe	1930
Lifeboat, Padstow	Gaumont Graphic	1930
Shamrock V, Cowes	Gaumont Graphic	1930
HMS Crescent, Barrow-in-Furness	Gaumont Graphic	1931
HMS Cygnet, Barrow-in-Furness	Gaumont Graphic	1931
HMS Kempenfelt, Cowes	British Pathe	1931
HMS Leander, Devonport	British Pathe	1931
Isle of Sark, ferry, Clydebank	Gaumont Graphic	1931
SS Autocarrier, car ferry, Glasgow	Gaumont Graphic	1931
The Empress of Britain, liner, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1931
Changkiang, train-ferry, Newcastle	Gaumont British News	1932
HMS Orion, battleship, Devonport	British Pathe	1932
Lifeboat, Brixham	British Pathe	1932
RMS Strathaird, liner,Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1932
Southern Cross, twin-screw motor ship, Cowes	British Pathe	1932
SS Remois, Teeside	British Pathe	1932

Bidson, ferry boat,	British Pathe	1933
Foremost, dredger, Clydeside	British Pathe	1933
HMS Ajax, light cruiser, Barrow-in-Furness	Gaumont British News	1934
HMS Apollo, light cruiser, Devonport	Gaumont British News	1934
HMS Endeavour, Gosport	Gaumont British News	1934
HMS Fury, Cowes	British Pathe	1934
HMS Galatea	British Pathe	1934
HMS Hermione, light cruiser, Govan	Gaumont British News	1934
HMS Severn, submarine, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1934
HMS Shipjack, minesweeper, Clydebank	Gaumont British News	1934
HMS Snapper, submarine, Chatham	Gaumont British News	1934
New Zealand Star, liner, Belfast	Gaumont British News	1934
Queen Mary, liner, Clydeside	British Movietone News British Pathe	1934
Dunedin Star, cargo boat, Birkenhead	British Pathe	1935
HMS Greyhound, destroyer, Barrow-in-Furness	Gaumont British News	1935
HMS Griffin, destroyer, Barrow-in-Furness	Gaumont British News	1935
Sydney, battle cruiser, Birkenhead	British Pathe	1935
Voreda, tanker, Greenock	Gaumont British News	1935
Awatea, passenger ship, Barrow-in-Furness	Gaumont British News	1936
Comanchee, tanker, Clyde	Gaumont British News	1936
HMS Newcastle, Walker-on-Tyne	British Pathe	1936
Buenos Aires, destroyer, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1937
Capetown Castle, liner, Belfast	Gaumont British News	1937
Corrientes, destroyer, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1937
Entre Rio, destroyer, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1937
HMS Ark Royal, Birkenhead	British Pathe Gaumont British News	1937 1937
HMS Gloucester, Devonport	British Pathe Gaumont British News	1937 1937
HMS Impulsive, destroyer, Cowes	Gaumont British News	1937
HMS Nubian, Southampton	British Pathe	1937
HMS Scorpion, gun boat, Cowes	British Pathe	1937
Lifeboat, Boulmer	British Pathe	1937
RMS Stratheden, liner Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1937
Santa Cruz, Argentinean destroyer Birkenhead	British Pathe	1937
Strathallan, liner, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1937
Dominion Monarch, liner, Tyneside	Gaumont British News	1938
Empire Day, speedboat, Lake Windermere	Gaumont British News	1938
HMS Edinburgh, Wallsend	British Pathe	1938

HMS Egret, Cowes	British Pathe	1938
HMS Falconet, Blyth	British Pathe	1938
Mount, motor vessel, Greenwich	British Pathe	1938
Edmund and Mary Robinson, lifeboat, Liverpool	British Pathe	1939
HMS King George V, Tyneside	British Pathe	1939
HMS Naiad, frigate, Tyne	Gaumont British News	1939
HMS Prince of Wales, Birkenhead	British Pathe Gaumont British News	1939 1939
HMS Shearwater, Sloop, Cowes	British Pathe	1939
HMS Triad, submarine, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1939
HMS Truant, submarine, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1939
Motor Torpedo Boat, Hampton-on Thames	British Pathe	1939
RMS Andes, Belfast	British Pathe	1939
HMS Mauritius, Tyne	British Pathe	1941
HMS Indefatigable, aircraft carrier	British Pathe	1942
Launch of a warship, Northern Shipyard	British Pathe	1942
Launch of a cargo ship	Gaumont British News	1943
HMS Duke of York, Scotland	British Pathe	1944
HMS Hercules, aircraft carrier, Tyneside	British Pathe	1945
HMS Eagle, aircraft carrier, Belfast	British Pathe	1946
Media, Liner, Clydebank	Newsreel Association Gaumont British News	1946 1946
SS Arnhem, passenger ship, Clydebank	Gaumont British News	1946
Edinburgh Castle, liner, Belfast	British Pathe	1947
El Hind, passenger ship, Clydeside	British Pathe	1947
Pathia, liner, Dumbarton	Gaumont British News	1947
RMS Coronia, liner Clydebank	British Pathe	1947
RMS Orcades, liner, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1947
British Mariner, Tanker, Clydeside	British Pathe	1948
Himalaya, liner, Barrow-in-Furness	Gaumont British News	1948
Rangitoto, liner, Tyneside	Gaumont British News	1949
Punta Medanos, cargo ship, Wallsend	Unknown	1950
SS British Sovereign, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1950
Velutina, tanker, Wallsend	British Pathe	1950
RMS Oronsay, liner, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1951
HMS Hermes, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1953
Britannia, royal yacht, Clyde	British Pathe	1953
HMS Explorer, submarine, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1954
SS World Harmony, Tyne	British Pathe	1954
Carinthia, passenger and cargo, Clydebank	Gaumont British News	1955
HMS Aldington, minesweeper	Gaumont British News	1955
British Valour, oil tanker, Wallsend	Gaumont British News	1956
Sylvania, liner, Clydebank	Gaumont British News	1956

RMS Menelaus, liner, Dundee	British Pathe	1957
British Trader, oil tanker, Glasgow	Gaumont British News	1957
RMS Oriana, liner, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1959
British Queen, tanker	British Pathe	1959
Canberra, liner, Belfast	British Pathe	1960
Empress of Canada, liner, Newcastle	British Pathe	1960
British Admiral, Petroleum Tanker, Barrow-in-Furness	BBC British Pathe	1961 1965
HMS Valiant, nuclear submarine, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1963
HMSNZ Waikato, frigate, Belfast	British Pathe	1965
HMS Resolution, nuclear submarine, Barrow-in-Furness	British Pathe	1966
John F. Kennedy, lifeboat, Lowestoft	British Pathe	1966
HMS Renown, nuclear submarine, Birkenhead	British Pathe	1967
Esso Northumbria, tanker, Newcastle	British Pathe	1969
Swift, Hovercraft, Ramsgate	British Pathe	1969
HMS Conqueror, nuclear submarine, Birkenhead	British Pathe	1969

Table 5: Appendix Four: Official Films of World War Two with Maritime Themes

	Year	**Producer/Sponsor**	**Subject**
A1 at Lloyds	1940	Strand/ British Council	Description of Lloyds services to world shipping
All Hands	1940	Ealing Studios	
Atlantic Patrol	1940	National Film Board of Canada	Canadian destroyer
Behind the Guns	1940	Merton Park	Including work of shipyards
Bringing it Home	1940	Merton Park/ Cadbury	Food convoys
Cargo for Androssan	1940	Ruby Grierson/MoI	1606ft Scotland Oil
Channel Incident	**1940**	**Denham & Pinewood**	**Fiction short, Dunkirk**
Coastal Defence	1940	British Movietonews	Part played by all three services to prevent invasion
Corvettes	1940	Spectator/ Admiralty	
HM Minelayer	1940	Verity/ Admiralty	
It's the Navy	1940	Branch Studios/ National Film Council of Australia	Australian Navy
Keeping the Fleet at Sea	1940	Argos/ National Film Council of Australia	Australian Navy
London River	1940	British Films/ British Council	Importance of river to commerce
Men of the Lightship	1940	GPO	Bombing of lightships in the Thames Estuary
Merchant Seamen	1940	Crown	
Merchant Ship	1940		Loading of cargo
Naval Operations	1940	Shell	
Owner Comes Aboard	1940	Spectator	Visit to a destroyer to see how National Savings are spent
Ports	1940	GB Instructional	
Raising Sailors	1940	Pathe	
Ring of Steel	1940	G. T. Cummins/ MoI	2938ft Allied Navies at work, Overseas Distribution
Royal Australian Navy	1940	Commonwealth Cinema	

Sailors Without Uniform	**1940**	**Spectator/ British Council**	**904ft Fishing in wartime**
Sam Pepys Joins the Navy	1940	Screen Services/ National Savings	Finance and the Royal Navy
Sea Cadets	1940	Strand	
Sea Fort	1940	Ealing Studios	Guarding the approach to key ports
Shipbuilders	**1940**	**GB Instructional**	
SOS	1940	Tida/ British Council	RNLI
The King's Men	1940	British Movietonews	Review of all armed forces
Undersea Patrol	1940	British Paramount News	
Cargoes	1941	Tida	Voyage aboard a merchant ship
Steel Goes to Sea	**1941**	**Merton Park/ British Council**	**Shipbuilding**
Ulster	1941	Strand/ British Council	Includes shipbuilding
WRNS	1941	Strand/ Admiralty	
A Good Landfall	1942	Strand/ Salvation Army	Communications to sailors
A Polish Sailor	1942	Conananen/ Polish MoI	
A Seaman's Story-People at War	1942	Realist	Merchant seamen
Arms from Scrap	1942	British Movietonews/Ministry of Supply	Including for shipbuilding
Battle of Supplies	1942	Strand	
Before the Raid	1942	Crown	Looting of a Norwegian fishing village by the Germans
Close Quarters	1942	Crown	Submarine patrol
Coastal Command	1942	Crown	
Coastal Village	1942	GB Instructional/ British Council	Fishermen
Commissioning a Battleship	1942	GB News	
Dockers	1942	Realist	
Find, Fix and Strike	1942	Ealing Studios	Training in the Fleet Air Arm
Free French Navy	1942	Spectator	French sailors who escaped and continued to fight under de Gaulle
Free House	1942	Verity	Sailors from Allied forces talk informally

Give us More Ships	1942	Merton Park/ National Savings	
Heroes of the Atlantic	1942	National Film Board of Canada	Canadian merchant seamen
His Majesty's Jollies	1942	British Paramount News	Royal Marines
HM Motor Launches	1942	GB News/ Admiralty	
HM Navies Go to Sea	1942	British Movietonews	
HMS George V	1942	Laurence & Elton/ Admiralty	Tour of the battleship
In the Drink	1942	New Realm/ Air Ministry	Air Sea Rescue
Seaman Frank goes Back to Sea	1942	Concanen/ National Savings	National Savings
Song of the Clyde	1942	Merton Park/ British Council	From source to sea
The Poles Weigh Anchor	1942	Conananen/ Polish MoI	Polish sailors on convoy with the RN
A Harbour Goes to France	1943	Admiralty & Army Film Units/ Admiralty	Mulberry Harbour
Little Ships of England	**1943**	**Spectator/ British Council**	**Dunkirk/ Shipbuilding**
Men from the Sea	1943	Spectator/ Admiralty	Merchant sailors
North Sea	1943	GPO	
Sea Scouts	1943	Technique	Training of Sea Scouts, from version made 1941 for overseas
The Volunteer	1943	Archers	Engineer and a pilot in the Fleet Air Arm
Tyneside Story	**1943**	**Spectator/ Ministry of Labour**	**Shipbuilding**
We Sail at Midnight	1943	Crown	Lend-Lease supplies reaching the UK
Atlantic Trawler	1944	Realist	
By Sea and Land	1944	Crown/ Admiralty	Royal Marine Patrol
Clydebuilt	**1944**	**Spectator/ Admiralty**	**Shipbuilding**
Malta Convoy	1944	British Movietonews	
Our Country	1944	Strand	Britain viewed through eyes of a merchant seamen returning after 2 years at sea
She Serves Abroad	1944	Army Film Unit/ War Office	Includes WRNS
Up Periscope	1944	Crown/ Admiralty	Made from the feature Close Quarters

Wartime Shipment of Packed Petroleum	1944	Shell/ Ministry of War Transport	
Western Approaches	**1944**	**Pat Jackson, Crown**	**Feature, Battle of the Atlantic, Merchantmen**
Jigsaw	1945	Verity	Anti-gossip film made from an Admiralty training film
MAC Ship	1945	Shell	Conversion of an oil tanker into an aircraft carrier
Soldier-Sailor	1945	Realist	Armed Merchantmen
The Broad Fourteens	1945	Crown	Motor torpedo boat crew
Three Cadets	1945	Green Park/ Service Departments	One from RAF, Army and Navy
Time and Tide	1945	Rotha Productions/ Admiralty	Admiralty salvage

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